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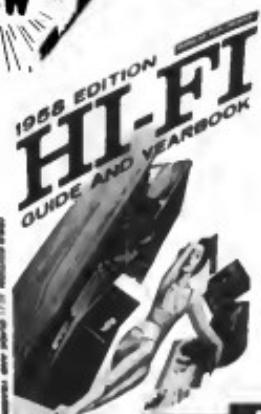
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By
Robert Bloch



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AMAZING STORIES, Vol. 32, No. 6, June 1958, is published monthly by Ziff-Davis Publishing Company, William B. Ziff, Chairman of the Board (1946-1953), at 64 E. Lake St., Chicago 1, Illinois. Entered as second-class matter at Post Office at Chicago, Ill. Subscription rates: U. S. and possessions and Canada \$4.00 for 12 issues; Pan American Union Countries \$4.50; all other foreign countries \$5.00.

AMAZING

SCIENCE FICTION STORIES

REG. U. S. PAT. OFF.

JUNE 1958
Volume 32 Number 6

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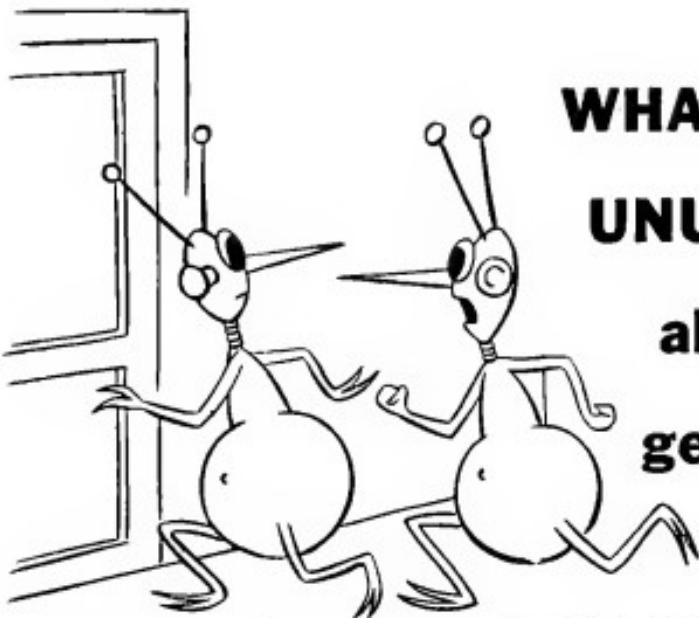
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Cover: EDWARD VALIGURSKY

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IN THE MAY '53 ISSUE OF—

—*Amazing*, Jack Lait and Lee Mortimer—who were then busy “Confidentializing” the earth, city by city—did a job on the planet Mars. They had it split up between the Syndicate and Russia, going all out because, as they said, “we dare you to prove us wrong.” But now, a scant five years later, proof might be closer than the boys imagined in '53.

Also of interest at that time, was the glossary of science fiction terms Lait and Mortimer included for the benefit of new readers.

Here are a few of them—with the Lait and Mortimer definitions: *Science Fiction*—A genre of escape literature which takes the reader to far-away planets and usually neglects to bring him back. *Bems*—A word formed from the first letters of “Bug Eyed Monster.” Ghastly looking creatures. In science fiction written on Earth, bems are natives of Mars. In s-f written on Mars—vice versa. *Orbit*—The path of any heavenly body moving according to natural laws; laws passed by the dems; now in process of repeal by the republicans. *Geiger counter*—A device for counting Geigers. *Disintegrating ray*—Something you can't see that turns something you can see into something you can't. *Mars*—A candy bar. *Pluto*—A kind of water. *Ether*—An invisible form of nothing that occupies all the nowhere beyond Earth. Also an anaesthetic. *Luna*—Another name for the Moon, borrowed from the name of a park in Coney Island. *Grav-plates*—A form of magnetic shoe worn by spacemen while standing against the outer hull of a spaceship in flight. Why a spaceman wants to stand on the outer hull of a spaceship in flight has never been made clear.—PWF



Completely sure of themselves, the would-be



RED MOON RISING

By ROBERT BLOCH

ILLUSTRATOR LLEWELLYN

Washington was appalled when Moscow announced a scientific triumph that made Sputnik look like a child's toy. Our leaders had to make a quick decision—with a gun pointed at their heads.

I'LL never forget the day they launched the big one.

At precisely four o'clock I was sitting in my little unpadded cell here at *Globe News*, pounding out the usual daily stint for a Washington dateline column called *The View from Washington's Monument*.

At precisely one minute after four the bulletins started coming in over the wire up front.

My office is way down at the end of the corridor, but within three minutes the bedlam had reached a pitch where I couldn't work any longer. I got up and joined the crowd in the front layout.

From the noise and the milling

around, you'd think they were doing the Christmas Party bit. Until you got a look at their faces.

I realized what had happened at once.

Somebody had pushed the panic button.

About the time I managed to squeeze my way clear of the corridor, McGregor climbed up on top of his desk and everybody shut up.

It was the sight of him there that did it. McGregor isn't the kind of a man who stands on desk, and we all knew it. The effect was as shocking as seeing Albert Schweitzer sitting in with Louis Armstrong at a Newport Jazz Festival.

Any tendency to murmur a comment about this was effectively stilled by a glimpse of McGregor's face. I've been with Globe for a good many years, and I'd never seen him so stunned—not even on the night that Truman clobbered Dewey.

Then he held up his hand and started to read.

Now it would be nice to pretend I have total recall, but the truth is that I can't give a single word of direct quotes. I was too stunned to remember; I could only react, as we all reacted.

But I got the message.

There was another satellite in the sky.

Another Sputnik had been launched.

And its estimated weight was in the neighborhood of fifty tons.

That's right. *One hundred thousand pounds.*

No official confirmation had been received yet, of course—but it wasn't necessary. Some eight million citizens had seen the satellite in orbit as it passed over Los Angeles and environs. Signals had already been picked up as it continued its progress.

It wasn't a gag, it wasn't a flying saucer, it wasn't a publicity stunt for Mike Todd's birthday.

The sword of Damocles was hanging over our head, and it weighed fifty tons.

Runners kept pushing through to McGregor with fresh bulletins, and somewhere along the line he stopped reading them and began calling out names. So-and-so to check the rival news-services and the TV networks immediately; so-and-so to contact our sources on the Geophysical Year project, at once; so-and-so to the Pentagon, pronto; so-and-so to the White House, soonest.

I turned away. I didn't expect to be called; when it came to questions of actual news, *The View from Washington's Monument* was pretty dim.

That's why I was startled when I heard my name blasted out. I got up to the desk in nothing flat, and McGregor gave me a glare which told me I should have made better time.

"Where's Carling?" he snapped.

"I don't know. It's his day off, isn't it? Have you tried—"

"Yes, we tried his apartment. And we tried the Mayflower Bar and that joint down on B Street, too. You're a buddy of his. What else would he be doing on his day off?"

"I—"

"Never mind. Go out and find him, fast."

"Right. It'll take me just five minutes to finish up on the column, and then—"

This wasn't my day for finishing sentences. McGregor, like the true executive he was, disposed of my column in a few well-chosen words.

I went straight back to my cubicle and picked up my hat and coat. In order to save time, I didn't even stop to do what he'd suggested I do with my column.

There was no need to emphasize the importance of finding Carling. At a time like this, Globe News could use his services. Leonard Carling was Science Editor. He'd copped a Pulitzer for his series on the Los Alamos Project a few years ago. A yarn like this could easily win him another.

If I could find him.

Actually, I had a pretty fair idea of where he might be. There was a little spot around the corner from his place, run by a bartender who detested rock-n'-roll and put his own collection of records on the juke box. Sometimes, on his day off, Carling would squeeze into a back booth and listen to a stack—stuff like the old Raymond Scott Quintet

numbers on the Brunswick label.

I managed to flag down a taxi on the street and gave the driver the address. Apparently he had not heard about the satellite yet, because he had nothing to say. This suited me. If I found Carling, he'd do plenty of talking. As a matter of fact, he already had.

On the face of it, our friendship was a very offbeat item. Carling wasn't just another wire-service reporter; he had quite an educational background, including the M. I. T. bit. As for me, I know just enough about science to change a washer—and even there I rely more on profanity than technological know-how. But somehow, we enjoyed each other's company. Maybe it was because both of us were divorced.

Carling thought so. I remember how he'd analyzed it one night. "It isn't so much that we're lonely," he said. "Each of us has our friends. But we lack sounding-boards. That's a wife's function, you know. To serve as a sounding-board for her lord and master. To listen to all his gripes, all the complaints, all the wild ideas and foolish theories. I used to talk to Lucy about the nucleonics projects twenty-four hours a day. Come to think of it, maybe that's why she divorced me. At least *you're* willing to listen."

I was. Maybe I couldn't dig the scientific terminology, but his opinions always interested me. Even lately, when he'd begun

to get very downbeat about the Red satellites and our own failures.

"You haven't seen anything yet!" he'd predicted, in that we-are-gathered-here-to-pay-our-last-sorrowful-tribute voice of his, just the other night. "The next one is going to be the clincher."

I didn't ask him how he knew.

Leonard Carling, on the basis of his reputation, had *entree* to high official circles and even higher unofficial circles. Much of his information came from the latter; he couldn't write it for publication, but he got the word.

And now his prophecy had come true.

So I was quite lathered up when I walked into the little bar and spotted Carling's gray crew-cut rising over the top of the rear booth. The place was almost empty; the bartender stood down front talking to a couple of Department of Agriculture stenographer types who were making faces at the juke box. The juke box didn't care; it went right on playing an old John Kirby number.

Leonard Carling looked up and smiled at me.

"Sit down," he said.

I shook my head. "Grab your socks," I told him. "McGregor wants you."

"Does he know where I am?"

"Of course not. But he sent me out to find you, and I guessed."

"So you couldn't locate me." He gestured. "Sit down and have an ale."

"No time. Wait'll you hear the news."

"About the satellite?" He shrugged. "The bulletin came over TV ten minutes ago. Fifty tons, I think they said."

I stared at him. "Well, aren't you going to do something about it?"

"I am doing something about it. I'm drinking ale. Care to join me?"

He signalled the bartender before I could object. I slumped into the seat opposite him when the bartender came and waited until he brought our order and went away again. John Kirby's outfit began to play *Rose Room*.

"I suppose McGregor wants me to check at top-level," he mused, pouring his ale carefully. "I imagine he'd like some interviews."

"Of course. So put on your coat and—"

"No, thanks. I brought in enough interviews when the earlier Sputniks were launched. Let him rewrite them. I guarantee the story will be the same."

He was using that funeral-oration voice of his, but somehow it sounded very appropriate. I listened.

"The first interview would be with the top brass, wouldn't it? You know what they'll tell me. The military geniuses who claimed they needed billions to keep us ahead of Russia in national defense will say this only proves they need *more* billions to keep us ahead. The big boys who

went around bragging about how America is always first in the technology race will issue statements denying there ever was a technology race. The politicians who did their best to get rid of all the egghead scientists will loudly proclaim that we need more egghead scientists. None of these people see a real Sputnik in the sky—all they see up there is a political football."

"But the man in the street—" I began.

"As for the man in the street, he doesn't see *anything*. When the first satellite was launched, there was plenty of publicity—but actually, the average citizen was more interested in whether or not the Braves would win the World Series. Of course, his wife was more excited when the second Sputnik went up—because of the dog. The way it struck her, it was a moral victory for our side; we would never send a poor, helpless little puppy to its doom that way! Then the dog died, and the public forgot the whole thing."

"They won't forget *this* one," I said. "There's a hundred thousand pounds up there. They saw it with the naked eye on the West Coast, and it'll be visible to the whole country on its orbital course. By tomorrow morning there'll be hell to pay. And you're still willing to sit here and make with the cheap cynicism."

"I'm using only the most expensive cynicism. The most costly, shall we say?"

"Either you're drunk or you've

flipped," I told him. "But if you don't snap out of it, half the world will be drunk or flipping within twenty-four hours. This thing is big enough to hold a dozen men. Is it a manned satellite? Maybe it's armed. Maybe it'll be followed by rockets with warheads. Aren't you interested in finding out?"

"Certainly. And in due time, Von Braun and Arthur C. Clarke will write articles on the subject."

"Be serious, won't you? I'm no scientist, but this thing scares hell out of me."

"Yes." He nodded slowly. "You're scared. And, as you say, everybody will be frightened by tomorrow. So my going out and getting interviews won't help the situation. Something more must be done."

"Such as sitting here and drinking, I suppose?"

"Exactly. It so happens I'm here by appointment. In a little while I expect a visitor. If our meeting goes as I think it might, it may be that I shall really be able to help."

"A visitor? Who?"

"I am not at liberty to say."

"You mean you already contacted a guy who—"

"He contacted me. I decided, under the circumstances, it would be wisest not to meet at my apartment. Therefore, I selected the semi-privacy of this establishment."

"Well, why didn't you say so in the first place? Just clue me in a

little so I can tell McGregor what you're doing."

"No. There must be no interference. When I'm certain of my facts, I'll notify him. Until then, just say that you couldn't find me."

"Look, at least give me a hint. Why all the hush-hush? Did you locate a leak somewhere? Is this government stuff?"

He shook his head.

I lowered my voice. "All right, let me guess. You're onto the Soviet angle, isn't that it? Somebody's willing to spill the inside story of how they did it. That must be it. Right?"

"Don't ask any questions. Now, run along. I'll see you tomorrow."

"Tomorrow," I echoed and went away. Wondering if there would be a tomorrow.

A nasty conviction was beginning to filter through to me. Talk about the propaganda value of the previous Sputniks—*this* was the real thing! One look at the Red moon in the sky tonight and the man in the street might very well become the man in the cellar, the man under the bedclothes, cowering and waiting for the first bomb to fall.

I thought about it as I drank my dinner down the street. Then, as the evening wore on, I thought about it some more.

Talk about the Christmas Party bit, or New Year's Eve! The streets were jammed and the bars were crowded. Everybody was talking, everybody was

yelling, everybody was drinking. But there was one difference—nobody was laughing or even smiling.

They had heard the word.

The word, out of Chicago, when the Red moon came over and the panic-stricken motorists abandoned their cars in the middle of Outer Drive.

The word, out of a small town in Pennsylvania, where an obscure religious leader of a still more obscure sect saw the sphere in the sky as a period proclaiming the end of the world and—gathering his fanatical followers—set fire to the buildings of the entire community.

The word, out of Boston, of riots in Scollay Square.

The Soviet Government must have anticipated this reaction, counted on it when they launched their miniature moon.

Miniature, hell! It weighed fifty tons. What kind of initial thrust had been necessary to launch a satellite of this size? With that kind of power, they could speed nuclear warheads around the world and back again. Maybe they'd be doing just that, soon.

Maybe they *were* doing it, now.

The Sputnik was circling above the globe, but the rumors circled even more swiftly down in the streets, rising from the saliva-flecked launching platforms of human lips.

"Jeez, did you hear the latest? Air Force spotted Red bombers comin' over Alaska . . ."

"Yeah, they hit Seattle. They must of, I was listening to CBS news and it was supposed to be a roundup, they said for Seattle to come in, and then they right away switched back to New York . . ."

"I have it on good authority, I tell you! Everything west of the Mississippi has been blacked out. The President will issue an emergency proclamation any minute now . . ."

"Shut up about the damn thing and let's get ourselves a drink!"

"—and what I want to know is, why hasn't the President gone on the air with a statement? I tell you the whole thing is part of a conspiracy, we've sold out to save our necks, and—"

"What I'm gonna do is climb in the car and get the hell out of town, right now. There's hills over in West Virginia where they'll never find you . . ."

"Who cares *how* much it costs? A fat lot of good it's going to do to save your money now, George!"

"I'm scared."

"Why doesn't somebody do something?"

"Have another drink!"

"To hell with you!"

"To hell with everybody!"

And that's the way it went; on the streets, in the bars, up and down Pennsylvania and along Connecticut and halfway to Chevy Chase. It wasn't a mob-scene yet, even though the cops

weren't in evidence and nobody was bothering to obey the traffic signals. The character who was thinking about West Virginia was a little more farsighted than his fellows; maybe by tomorrow at this time there would be a wild exodus from this city and from every city, but tonight it was mainly a matter of restless wandering and hysterical wondering. And finally it all blended into a blur of *I'm scared why doesn't somebody do something, have a drink and to hell with you*, over and over and over again until I was scared and wanted somebody to do something and wanted a drink—and then I said to hell with it.

And elbowed my way back along the streets until I came to the little bar where I'd left Leonard Carling.

He was gone, of course. The bartender said he'd left over an hour ago. Yes, he'd had company in the back booth—a little fellow with dark glasses. They'd talked for quite a while, and then he went away. Carling stuck around for another drink and then vanished.

I looked at my watch. It was almost eleven o'clock. Carling had gone home.

So I walked around the corner to his apartment. The crowd was streaming past, and I paid no attention to any of the faces wavering before me. It wasn't until a man hurried out of the doorway and jostled me just as I walked in that I bothered to take a second look. He disappeared in

the mob before I got a glimpse of his face; I couldn't even see if he wore dark glasses or not.

Do Russian spies wear dark glasses, or is that corny? Are Russian spies corny, with or without dark glasses? Carling hadn't really admitted anything to me.

But I'd admitted one thing to myself. Corny or not, I was frightened. For myself, for Carling, for everybody.

And I got up those stairs, fast. I hurried down the hall to his apartment door, started to press the buzzer. Then I noticed, with a shock, that light was streaming across the carpet. His door was ajar.

I pushed it open, catching sight of Carling's profile as he sat behind his desk staring out the window.

My first reaction was relief; my second, indignation. I stormed up to him.

"Don't you know any better than to leave the door open?" I muttered. "What's the matter, have you got a hole in your head?"

I crossed the room in five steps. As my feet thudded across the floor, Carling nodded. At least, I thought he was nodding, then realized he was swaying and falling forward, out of the chair.

But not before I saw his forehead.

Leonard Carling *did* have a hole in his head.

They didn't let me go until

past noon the following day, and even then I was lucky.

I was lucky because there were fingerprints all over the room; Carling's and somebody else's—not mine. I hadn't even touched the doorknob when I came in.

I was lucky because the bartender told a straight story about my meeting with Carling and how I'd come back to find him, less than five minutes before I phoned the police about the discovery of his body.

I was lucky because they listened to what I told them about my encounter with Carling, and how I'd seen a stranger come out of the place just before I found him.

But even so, I doubt if they would have let me go—even on bail, as a material witness—if McGregor hadn't pulled strings in high places. Not with the D. C. police force, either, but with the Federal boys. Yes, they were in on it from the first. They were great on listening and not much on talking, but I managed to find out one thing which confirmed my own suspicions—Carling had evidently made some connections with the Reds.

That he was a traitor I could not and didn't believe. That the man he'd met in the tavern was a Soviet agent was still a matter of conjecture. That the man who killed him was the same person seemed even more dubious. It was much more likely that he'd managed to contact a defecting agent who gave him some information—but that another agent

had then trailed him and killed him immediately. The crime was clumsily and hastily committed; evidently it was of the utmost importance to get him out of the way before he could reveal what he had learned.

But it was all theory.

And now we'd never know what he *had* found out.

"Maybe I can really help," he'd said.

Well, it was too late now.

That's what I told McGregor, driving back along Pennsylvania after they turned me loose.

He sighed. "You're right, it is too late now. But I doubt if he could have found out anything that would stop this."

"What're you talking about?"

He blinked at me. "I forgot, you've been under wraps for fourteen hours, haven't you? You didn't hear about the press conference."

"Where? The White House?"

McGregor sighed again. "I wish to God that's where it was. But things have changed. This one is scheduled for two o'clock—at the Soviet Embassy."

"The Reds called—?"

He still wasn't letting me finish my sentences. "The Reds are calling everything," he muttered. "Including the shots. This is top level. The Soviet Government refused to issue any statement in reply to the questions of our own State Department last night or this morning. Instead, they set up this conference at the Embassy. Only the news service reps are to be admitted; two

from each agency. And if our officials want to find out what's going on, they'll have to come and beg admittance."

"But that's fantastic!"

"What isn't?" He chewed on his pipe. "Is it fantastic that New York City is being evacuated? That a National Emergency has been proclaimed? That this damned Red moon is putting the fear of death into the citizens of Dubuque and bringing psychosis to Peoria?

"Don't you worry—our big wheels will roll into the Soviet Embassy this afternoon. You'll see them there."

I stared at him.

"That is, if you're up to it. I've got permission for two representatives from our outfit. Naturally, I wanted to cover it myself. If Carling were alive, God rest him, he'd be the other one. But in view of what happened, I thought of you. Not because of what you can write, but because of the tie-in with the story. Human interest angle, get it?" He laughed, but there was no mirth in his mouth. "Human interest! I wonder if any of us will give a damn about human interest by this time tomorrow?"

We turned off; we were approaching the Embassy now. Crowds boiled along the streets, but National Guardsmen had cleared an inner lane.

"What do you think is going to happen?" I asked.

Again the lifeless laughter came. "Isn't it obvious? The

Reds have won the war before it's started. They weren't ready to risk a sneak attack and they weren't going to sit back and wait for us to try and catch up to their scientists, either. How they ever managed to get this thing into the sky I'll never understand—but the point is, they did it. Which means they have the power to blast their bombs anywhere in the world.

"This so-called 'press conference' is merely a public gesture. Actually, I doubt if anybody is going to get a chance to ask questions. We'll be *told*. And it won't be a matter of issuing a prepared statement. What we're going to hear is an ultimatum. They're going to dictate terms of surrender. It's all out in the open, now—an *either-or* proposition."

"Do you think we'll accept it?"

"What choice do we have?"

We were parking now. The gates of the Embassy loomed ahead. McGregor fumbled in his coat, handed me a wallet.

"It's yours," he said. "Identification and credentials for this clambake. They'll be strict."

They were strict. And once inside, there was none of the old-style red-carpet-and-champagne treatment. As we assembled in the big hall I didn't even notice the usual buffet and bar setup for the press. More significant still, I saw no neat stacks of printed handouts awaiting distribution for after the conference.

We took our places on hard chairs, before a long table. I recognized a number of the boys from the other outfits: AP, UP, INS, the radio and TV networks. They weren't fraternizing; just sitting glumly. Then the top-level people started coming in, and they were even glummer.

McGregor nudged me. "See, what did I tell you?" he whispered, fiercely. "The House, the Senate, the whole damned Cabinet! Plus the Chiefs of Staff and—"

I nudged him back. "There," I murmured. "Two seats ahead. The little fellow with the dark glasses!"

"You're crazy! You mean the one the bartender said was talking to Carling? It couldn't be—"

"I'm going to find out," I began, and started to rise.

McGregor pulled me back.

"Not now," he said. "Here it comes!"

The doors had closed behind us and now another door opened at the end of the room. A half-dozen men filed in, all of them wearing the uniform of the Soviet Army. They took their places at the big table. Suddenly the room became quiet—deadly quiet.

Then the fat man walked out.

He wasn't smiling and he wasn't waving, the way he usually did in the newsreels. He merely moved to the head of the table, then stood there and stared.

There was an audible rustle as he took a paper from his pocket

and laid it on the table before him. Quite deliberately he donned spectacles. Then he picked up the paper and started to read.

McGregor had guessed right. This was no press conference—not even the pretense of one.

What we were listening to was a demand for unconditional surrender.

Again, there's no sense pretending that I can give direct quotes. The guttural voice droned on; sometimes the pompous phrases blurred, but the meaning was always clear.

As I listened, I glanced at the little man wearing the dark glasses. He sat there, hunching forward, his head protruding from the neck of his big overcoat, and in profile he resembled a turtle peering out of his carapace. The dark glasses contributed to the effect, as did his mittenened hands, which twisted nervously in his lap as he listened to the ultimatum.

The guttural voice droned on.

There was no sense in maintaining a pretense any longer, the voice told us. The time for meaningless diplomacy was past. There was no more need for hypocritical protestations of friendship. Since we, as a nation, had persisted in our war-mongering efforts in spite of every reasonable warning, it had been decided to take steps. Once and for all, it would be demonstrated that the Rusisan Soviet Federated Socialist Republic had the might, as well as the right, to assume world leadership. We

had just witnessed the first portion of that demonstration.

Now we would be given the opportunity to respond to it. A detailed agreement had been drawn up which would establish our future relationship, and in a moment its terms would be outlined.

However, if for any reason these terms were ignored, it would be necessary to allow the demonstration to proceed. We had already seen the Russian satellite. It was to be fervently hoped that we would not require a first-hand experience of comparable Russian advances in the field of thermonuclear warfare.

"Yesterday," the guttural voice proclaimed, "the Soviet Union launched a Red moon. Tomorrow we launch a Red world!"

I had been watching the turtle-profile of the man in the dark glasses. Now I was startled to see him move; though not half as startled as the Soviet spokesman when he rose and took three paces forward, facing the room.

"He lies!"

The voice was even deeper than that of the official Soviet spokesman. Deeper, and more compelling. "He lies!" the voice repeated.

"No, let me speak. You understand, of course, that it will do no good to try and harm me."

Suddenly, shockingly, the fat face of the Soviet leader began to sag. "Who are you?" he murmured. "How did you come here?"

"The credentials I presented state that I am Leonard Carling," the stranger said. "This, of course, is a falsehood, for Leonard Carling is dead—murdered by one of your agents, no doubt, after I talked to him last night."

"Originally, it had been planned that Leonard Carling be here today, to bring you the truth. He was selected on the basis of his reputation, as a proper, unbiased representative. Now he is dead, and I must speak for him.

"What he was prepared to tell you was quite simple. It is this. There is no Russian satellite in the sky today."

The Soviet leader did not move. The uniformed men did not rise to shoot the stranger. The crowd did not murmur. The silence in that room was thick as solid glass.

"I repeat—there is no Russian satellite in the sky today. And the Russians know it. That is why they dare not harm me. Because there would be retaliation—far worse than anything with which they have threatened you.

"Naturally, they had no way of knowing just what the satellite really was. All they realized was that they had not launched it; could not possibly have launched an instrument of such magnitude. When no statement was forthcoming from your government, and panic spread, they knew no so-called western power was responsible. It was then decided to take a daring gamble; to capitalize on the general as-

sumption that this was a Russian satellite and call for your surrender.

"It was in anticipation of this that Leonard Carling was approached and given the truth. Since he is no longer able to speak, you must listen to me."

I wanted to believe him. And yet I had to know. Before I realized it, I was on my feet, my voice thinly insistent.

"What proof have we got? How can we be sure this isn't just another trick—that you didn't murder him yourself?"

The turtle-profile turned to face me.

"I am not totally unfamiliar with your police methods," the deep voice intoned. "According to my understanding, there is the question of fingerprints found in Leonard Carling's apartments. In order to leave fingerprints, one must have—fingers."

And the mitten hands rose and twisted, the mittens fell to the floor. I, and everyone in the room, saw what they had concealed—the pink, webbed paws.

The pink, webbed paws that rose, now, sweeping off the dark glasses and revealing the place where the eyes *should* have been, and the short, blunted stalks which took their place in the rimmed sockets and evidently fulfilled their function in some unearthly way—

"I see I have convinced you in this matter," the voice contin-

ued. "And I trust I am equally convincing in my other statements to you. When I tell you that the satellite in the sky is not a creation of Russia or any other nation. To be quite specific, it is *not* a satellite. You might call it a 'spaceship', but even this term is inadequate. It is best that you think of it as a warning.

"I do not presume to threaten, but I can advise. I suggest that all of you—as official representatives or as common citizens of your various governments—instantly abandon any further efforts to place 'artificial moons' in orbit. I suggest you turn your eyes away from the stars and contemplate, with renewed honesty and insight, the spectacle of life here on your own earth. You have much to do here.

"The time may come when you have achieved the vision to go beyond. But you are not presently prepared or qualified; your motives and attitudes can lead only to self-destruction.

"I ask you to convey this message to the world at large, and to act upon it. For the span of a lunar month, we shall continue to orbit the earth. If you cooperate within that time, we shall leave you. If, however, you do not comply, we shall be forced to take—further measures.

"But I sincerely hope this will not prove necessary. And once again, I urge you to heed my warning.

"I suggest that you abandon the satellite race and consider the human race."

That was the end. The end of his speech and the end of his presence among us. I didn't have to ask how it was that he managed to get by the stake-out at Leonard Carling's apartment and acquire his wallet and credentials. If you can disappear into thin air at will, you undoubtedly can appear at will, too.

The point is, *you can't*. And I can't.

We happen to be human.

And as for him—

Well, all this happened about ten days ago, and the thing in the sky is still orbiting on schedule.

But the universal treaties have been signed, and the whole peace program is going forward, and chances are he'll carry out his part of the bargain and take the object away at the end of the month.

Meanwhile, habit is a funny thing. The papers, and most people, still refer it to as a Red moon.

Oddly enough, they *could* be right at that. According to the way I heard it, Russia isn't the only thing that's Red.

Seems to me there's also a Red planet out there.

Some day, maybe, we'll have a chance to find out for ourselves, first-hand.

Some day....

THE END

MAYHEM ENSLAVED

By C. H. THAMES

ILLUSTRATOR SCHOENHERR

Here's Johnny Mayhem again. Mr. Thames' series character has become so popular he gets fan letters just like Lassie and Clark Gable. We haven't been able to catch up with him ourselves, so if you see him around tell him to come in and pick up his mail.

BUT I can't see you!" Patricia MacKenzie protested.

"I arrived early," the room told her. It was a small bare room with one wall of glass. Behind the glass was a greenish liquid, and in the liquid floated a body. It was the body of a man in the prime of life. It was quite dead. The back of its skull was crushed and flattened from some old wound.

Patricia MacKenzie looked around the bare room. The voice spoke to her out of thin air. She had expected it, but the result nevertheless un-nerved her. "Mayhem? Mayhem? At least stand still. Your voice seems to come from a different point in the room every time you speak."

"I can't help that. An electric field in the walls of the room contains my *elan*. Nothing can keep it still. You see, our tim-

ing's off. The Galactic League Firstman told me it will be sometime yet before the body is thawed sufficiently to perform the necessary plastic surgery on the skull. When it's ready, I'll inhabit it. Meanwhile, why don't you bring me up-to-date on why I've been sent here? The Galactic Firstman wasn't much help in that department. You're from Anthropology Central, he tells me."

"That's right," Patricia MacKenzie said, shutting her eyes so she wouldn't realize, at least visually, that she was talking to thin air. Patricia MacKenzie was a pretty young woman of Scottish-Earth ancestry and, like her Scottish forebears, usually considered herself canny enough not to be frightened by voices and visions. But that, she told herself with a wry smile,



Was this to be the end of Mayhem?

was exactly the status of Johnny Mayhem at this moment, and would be until he inhabited the body now being prepared for him.

She knew the Mayhem legend, of course. Every world which had an Earthman population and a Galactic League post, however small, had a body in cold storage, waiting for Johnny Mayhem if his services were required. But of course no one knew precisely when Mayhem's services might be required. No one knew definitely under what circumstances the Galactic League Council, operating from the hub of the Galaxy, might summon Mayhem. And only a very few people, including those at the Hub and the Galactic League Firstmen on civilized worlds and Observers on primitive worlds, knew the precise mechanics of Mayhem's coming.

Johnny Mayhem, a bodiless sentience. Mayhem — Johnny Marlow, then—who had been chased from Earth, a pariah and a criminal, eight years ago, who had been mortally wounded on a wild planet deep within the Saggitarian Swarm, whose life had been saved—after a fashion—by the white magic of that planet. Mayhem, doomed now to possible immortality as a bodiless sentience, an *elan*, which could occupy and activate a corpse if it had been frozen properly . . . an *elan* doomed to wander eternally because it could not remain in one body for

more than a month without body and *elan* perishing. Mayhem, who had dedicated his strange, lonely life to the service of the Galactic League because a normal life and normal social relations were not possible for him. . . .

"That's right," Patricia MacKenzie repeated. "I'm from Anthropology Central. Or, to be more exact, I'm a field worker for a brand new organization under Anthropology Central. Did you ever hear of H.R.R.?"

"No."

"It's Human Resources Reclamation, Mayhem. With the human race spread thin across the Galaxy like . . . like the British Redcoats of old, its important that all our resources are utilized properly, including human resources. Believe it or not, we have machines which can locate special high orders of creative intelligence. The Galaxy needs them, Mayhem, but too often, due to accident of birth, they stagnate in the backwater areas of the Galaxy, thus not making the contributions to free human society that they could make."

"Backwaters—like this planet?"

"Well, yes and no. If the genius in question were living here on Baloy, it would be a simple job. Relocation must be voluntary, of course, but I'd merely apprise him, as a field worker for Human Resources Reclamation, of the situation. This case—is different."

"How?"

"Did you ever hear of Purdunn?"

"Sure I did. It's a planet with non-human masters and an enslaved human population. Why?"

Patricia MacKenzie took a deep breath and said: "Because that's where our genius lives."

"On Purdunn?"

"That's right, Mayhem. A slave, with alien masters. As you know, Galactic League ordinances stipulate that we cannot interfere with the internal affairs of a planet. Whether its ruling race is human or not doesn't matter. But getting this genius out wouldn't be interfering—if we can get him out, you see. And that's where you come in."

"To get him?"

"Precisely. And it's liable to be the hardest job of your career."

"It doesn't sound so difficult," Mayhem's bodiless sentience said telepathically.

"I assure you, it is. You see, this particular creative genius has been brainwashed—that's the term, isn't it?—by the non-human masters of Purdunn. To use another ancient term, he's their quisling, helping the Purdunne to keep their human slaves in thrall. According to our intelligence reports, the human slaves on Purdunn, after several generations of slavery, are ready to revolt. You must stop this revolt, Mayhem."

"I must what?"

"You must prevent the humans from gaining their freedom at all costs—at least for now."

"Count me out," Mayhem said. "I'd want to help them, not prevent them."

"Please. Please listen to me. If their revolt is successful, they'll kill Davd Hara. That's the name of the creative genius, Davd Hara. And I don't have to tell you that the sort of political genius, the ability to lead and organize people, which Davd Hara has demonstrated, is the rarest and most difficult of all human achievements. The Galaxy needs Davd Hara, Mayhem—and we need him off Purdunn. But of course, he isn't another Johnny Mayhem. We need him alive. If you can stop the revolution long enough to kidnap him, you'd have done mankind a great service. As for his brainwashing, once we have Davd Hara off Purdunn, we can cure him. Now do you understand?"

If Mayhem's sentience had had a head, he would have shaken it. If it had had a voice, the voice would have retorted angrily. As it was, Mayhem's sentience replied telepathically: "I won't have any part in squelching a human revolution on Purdunn. I've heard of Purdunn, Miss. The Purdunne are cruel, sadistic. The day their rule ends will be a happy day for the human inhabitants of Purdunn. No, Miss MacKenzie. As I said before, count me out."

"But we need Davd Hara! The revolution can wait, don't you see? Until after you've delivered Davd Hara into our hands. They've waited this long; they can wait a little longer."

"If they're ready now, let them revolt."

"You can say that—with human societies the galaxy over crying for leadership? You can say that, with the thin bonds which tie the Earthman world with the Earthman world growing more tenuous all the time?"

"I won't help the Purdunuese against their human subjects. That's all."

"And I thought you worked for us. For the good of mankind," Patricia MacKenzie added bitterly.

"I do. But it's voluntary. I do—what I want to do."

For a while Patricia MacKenzie didn't say anything. There was nothing for her to say, because she knew she had failed in her first important mission for Human Resources Reclamation. She almost felt like crying.

"But listen," Mayhem's soundless voice spoke out of thin air, "there's this possibility. I'd be willing to try it if you'd be willing to authorize it for the Baloy Firstman. I'll go to Purdunn—it's the next planet outward in this system, isn't it? I'll do some G-2ing on my own. And if I find there's a way to get Davd Hara out alive without squelching the human revolution, I'll

try to do it. In fact, Miss MacKenzie, I'm liable to try and help the humans on Purdunn, so don't say you weren't warned. Well?"

"My gosh, the way you talk you'd think I was against the Purdunuese human population!"

"Well?"

"Of course. The only thing is, I don't think you'll have a chance your way. Once the revolution, which has practically started, gains momentum, there will be no saving Davd Hara. Once . . ."

"Saving a traitor to the human race," Mayhem observed. "I'm going to love that."

"But he's been brainwashed. We can cure him."

"I guess you can at that, if you say so. Well, that's your department."

Patricia MacKenzie wished there was a Mayhem in sight to hug. "Then you'll do it?"

"Yes, I'll do it. My way."

"Your way, Johnny Mayhem. And—thank you."

"How will I get to Purdunn?"

"It's been arranged to send your new body, once you inhabit it, to a desolate part of Purdunn. There will be a mechanism to destroy the one-man spaceship, because otherwise the Purdunuese patrols will find it and know we have a spy, an outworlder, on their planet. The Purdunuese, you see, have no diplomatic relations with any outworld. They kill all aliens on sight."

"That's nice," Mayhem said. Patricia MacKenzie thought she

recognized silent laughter in the telepathic voice.

Five minutes later the technicians from the Galactic League Firstman's office drained the thawing fluid from the tank which held what was to be Mayhem's new body and began to reshape its shattered head with plastic surgery. Minutes after that, Mayhem felt his *elan* drawn toward warmth and flesh—with the searing, blinding, consciousness-destroying pain which always went with rebirth. . . .

Mayhem awoke in space, his new body, naked like the human slave-denizens of Purdunn, straining against the enormous pressure of deceleration.

He recognized the cylindrical construction of the interior of a small, one-man spaceship. His eyes bugged, his mouth sagged in a fixed position and his skin was drawn taut as the little ship screamed down through the atmosphere of a planet. Purdunn? It would be Purdunn of course.

Deceleration made Mayhem black out once more.

When he awoke a second time, he had landed.

It was night, and it was cold. Unconsciously, he must have opened the small port of the spaceship. Momentarily his eyes caught the reflection of his new body in a polished bulkhead. He was nude, in the prime of life, quite bald—the males on Purdunn had no hair—and he was equipped with the huge, pro-

truding, almost pigeon-like chest of the human denizens of Purdunn. This chest, he knew, had been an evolutionary mutation which had bred true because Purdunn's atmosphere and oxygen content were thin.

That also explained the cold. There wasn't much atmosphere on Purdunn to keep the heat of day, so at night the temperature plummetted. Conversely, without much air to shield the surface of the planet from the Purdunnese sun, it was desperately, vitality-sappingly hot during the Purdunnese day.

Cold and shivering, Mayhem crawled from the spaceship. He was reluctant to destroy it, because for all he knew it was his only means of escaping from Purdunn, but he knew he had to. He pulled the lever which activated the built-in disintegrator, and ran for it. He had ten seconds. Then the little spaceship would go lightlessly molten, and soon even the slag would become tenuous, would finally drift off as vapor. It wasn't actual disintegration, of course. It was controlled sub-atomic heat, with the heat—like an implosion—contained inwardly until the spaceship had been entirely consumed. The result was the equivalent of theoretical disintegration.

Mayhem looked back, and in the cold starlight saw the sluggish flow of slag. He looked again. The slag vaporized before his eyes. Where there had been a spaceship now was—nothing.

Mayhem was on Purdunn to stay, unless he could find another means of escape—with Davd Hara, and without squelching the human population's bid for freedom.

Mayhem wrapped his heavy cloak about his shivering limbs. It was the only garment allowed to the Purdunnese humans by their masters. Their daytime nudity, the Purdunnese must have figured, was one of many means of degradation, making them feel like animals, making them less capable of revolt. . . .

What was the first step?

Mayhem didn't know. But sheer survival seemed most important in the numbing cold. He stomped off toward the west.

According to the Firstman on Baloy, he had made planetfall on Purdunn's northeastern landmass. The continent was called Purdeste, and Purdunn City—the capital—was located there. If the interplanetary orbit had been accurate, Mayhem had landed a hundred miles east of Purdunn City and four miles east of a small settlement—it was really little more than a human breeding ranch—called Valee. It was in the hypothetical direction of Valee that Mayhem trekked. Almost at once he was numb with cold. For while the Purdunnese with their thick insect-like exoskeletons could withstand the extreme changes of temperature, human beings could not. A man after sunset on Purdunn either found his way indoors—or perished.

Mayhem stalked along numbly through the cold.

He seemed to be walking for countless hours. Time and the world and his purpose on Purdunn retreated to an unreal corner of his mind. There was only the killing cold, the need to stagger forward, first the left foot, then the right, then the left, each step more agonizing than the last . . .

All at once, after he had given up all hope of reaching the ranch at Valee, a voice hailed him out of the darkness. Mayhem's Purdunnese human memories—his now because he inhabited a dead Purdunnese human body—recognized the voice for a man's, not an Overlord's. The voice called:

"You! You there! What are you doing out at night?"

Mayhem staggered forward. A light suddenly blinded his eyes. He was so numb with cold he barely felt the hands which grasped his arms. When they did so, the circle of light seemed to expand. A man was on his left, a woman on his right, both in hooded parkas. Their garb, Mayhem knew with the part of his mind that still functioned in the cold, identified them as human police who worked for the Purdunnese.

And his mind, abruptly lucid despite the killing cold, recorded two other facts. The first was merely of anthropological interest. The human slaves of the Purdunnese, Mayhem knew—

and the knowledge was now confirmed by the fact—always worked in pairs, a man and a woman. The reason was simple: the Purduunese, always in need of more and still more human slaves, encouraged breeding every way they could.

The second fact was more important. If the memory of Mayhem's Purduunese human body was accurate, guards patrolling the outskirts of the Valee ranch—or any human ranch—were a new phenomenon at night. What did they mean? They had to mean that the human slaves were acting up—using the cold and dark of night for secret meetings, or terrorist raids, or the stealing and hiding of weapons in preparation for the time of reckoning.

"Well? What are you doing, man?"

"I—I got lost."

"Outside the stockade?"

Mayhem didn't answer. He didn't know what to say.

"Answer me!"

A heavy gloved hand struck his face. His skin was stiff with cold. The gloved hand felt like a chunk of ice. Mayhem stumbled and fell.

"Get up!"

He got up rockily, lost his footing again, and regained it.

"If you don't answer, we'll leave you out here." That was the woman.

The man hit him again. It wasn't a hard blow. It didn't have to be. The cold made the difference.

"Are you a worker or a breeder?"

Mayhem mumbled something. His senses swam.

"All right then, a breeder. What number pen?"

"Four," said Mayhem, picking a number at random.

"Why did you go out at night?"

Mayhem maintained his silence. He was all but unconscious from the numbing cold.

A hand lifted his cloak. He heard the woman giggle, and the man said: "I don't understand. He's wearing only the cloak. If he really was a revolutionist—"

"He'd be dressed for the night."

"That's what I mean." The man laughed harshly. "Did your temp-mate put you out? An argument?"

"Yes," Mayhem said, grasping at the idea.

"Why didn't you say so? You want the cold to kill you? Go back inside and assert yourself man. Our function is breeding. Tell the woman. Beat her if you have to. Well?"

Mayhem collapsed from the cold. His limbs were too stiff to function now.

He heard the man say disgustedly: "Help me carry him." He was lifted, and bumped along.

"He's a big one," the woman's voice said. "And well-muscled. He isn't soft like a breeder. Do you suppose—?"

"No. He probably recently

came off work-cycle. That could account for his embarrassment. Come on, he's heavy."

Mayhem was carried along. Presently a gate clanged. A delicious warmth stole over his being. There were voices, and directions to pen four. He was set on his feet, his weight supported on the man's shoulder. There was more talking. The words faded and came back, like waves.

"There a lone girl in pen four?"

"Quadrangle D, third door."

"That must be the one. Come on, fellow. Walk a little further, can't you? We won't report this."

"Here we are," the woman's voice said.

A door opened on crude wooden hinges. Mayhem was thrust inside. Footsteps retreated. Mayhem sank to the floor and knew no more until morning.

"Feeling better?"

Mayhem blinked. It was a girl's voice. He opened his eyes.

The girl was squatting near him, slim and young and pretty, with long blonde hair combed down in front to cover her nakedness and a simple breech-clout about her loins.

"They brought you in last night," she said.

Mayhem looked around. It was a small room furnished with a bed of mats piled on straw, a water-pump, a crude low table and a charcoal stove.

The girl blushed. "I—I've al-

ways been a worker. I've never been a breeder before. What's your name?"

"I am—Hakko." That was the name of the dead man whose body Mayhem inhabited.

"My name is Marl. Are you a —breeder."

"I've always been a worker before too, Marl."

"Oh." The girl didn't seem to know what to say. She stammered, "Are you hungry?"

Mayhem nodded. Gruel was cooking on the charcoal stove. Marl brought Mayhem a bowl, and he ate. His limbs tingled painfully from last night's cold. Otherwise he felt all right.

"They sent me here—" Marl began.

"Yes?"

"I shouldn't tell you. But I must."

"Then tell me."

"They sent me here—as punishment. I've never been on a ranch before. I did something I wasn't supposed to do."

"What did you do, Marl?"

"I went to a meeting of rebels. In Purduunn City. If my father wasn't—who my father is—they would have killed me."

"And who is your father?"

Marl said: "Davd Hara."

Mayhem didn't say anything.

"Do you hate me?"

"Why should I?"

"Because of my father. You've heard of my father, of course. He's the Chief Administrator under the Overlords."

"I don't hate you for that, Marl."

Unexpectedly, the girl looked angry. "I almost wished you would."

"Why?"

Marl's eyes were bright suddenly with tears. "It was why the rebels had me at their meeting. They wanted access to my father. They wanted to—kill him. I was there to argue against that. I hate what my father stands for, Hakko, but I can't hate my father. I can't help them kill him. My own flesh and blood. They're going ahead without me. Or they're going to try to. I tried to warn him. He's living in a world of dreams and fancy. He wouldn't believe me. I couldn't make him believe me, even when I told him where I'd been. Instead of thanking me, he reported me. At first the Overlords wanted to kill me, but father had enough influence to suggest a breeding ranch as punishment instead. But I don't hate him. I don't hate 'him.'" Marl's passionate tone became all at once shy. "Will we breed today, Hakko?"

"What about your father? When will the attempt on his life be made?"

"Tomorrow, Hakko. There's to be a general uprising in Capital City. I tried to tell the others here at the ranch, but no one would believe me. They're preparing to fight, too, but it will be disorganized, the timing off." She tossed back her hair in an unconscious gesture of frustration and annoyance, revealing soft, tanned skin. "Hakko, I, I

—when they sent me here, I expected to be given a fat, ridiculously jolly and weak male as a temp-mate." She blushed. "You are not like that at all. I—I don't think I'd mind breeding with you."

"And the revolution?"

"We aren't in Capital City," Marl said simply. "That is where the revolution will succeed or fail."

"Then we'll go there."

Marl gasped. "You have a way?"

"I'll find a way."

"But today of all days, when a party of Overlords from the capital is coming to inspect the ranch. We wouldn't have a chance of slipping out. Not the least opportunity."

Mayhem was suddenly alert. "How are they coming, Marl?"

"In a jet-car, naturally. But—"

"Then that's our way to Capital City."

"You are crazy. They would never—"

"But you want to save your father?"

"Yes, oh, yes! If it were possible—"

"That's why I'm here," Mayhem said. "I can't explain more. You wouldn't understand, you'll just have to trust me. If I take you to Capital City, could you lead me in secret to your father?"

"I suppose I could." Then suspicion flared in Marl's eyes. "How do I know you're not in

on the plot to kill him? It's part of the revolutionary plan."

"Again, you'll have to trust me. Well?"

Marl didn't answer for a long time. Finally she said, "I have nothing to lose if I do, Hakko. All right. Get me out of here and I'll do as you wish. I know what my father is doing is wrong, but I love him. I can't help loving him."

"Tomorrow," Mayhem said, "let's hope you get a chance to prove it."

"Breeders, attention!"

It was afternoon. All the breeders were lined up in pairs in the compound of the Valee ranch, and the human ranchers were preparing to parade them before the Overlord inspection team. Earlier, three jet-cars from Capital City, the human name for Purdunn City, had arrived. It was Mayhem's first look at the Overlords. They were the size of men and, in terms that an Earthman could understand, resembled lobsters. The resemblance, of course, was only superficial. They had exoskeletons, as lobsters have. They were man-sized, and their armor-like exteriors gleamed with polish.

They stood—if lobsterlike creatures can be said to stand—near the ranch gate. They watched the breeders file past two by two, the men big and soft, the women round and plump.

Mayhem and Marl were singled out, as Mayhem had hoped.

This was no accident. Only Mayhem of the breeder men was tall, lean and hard-muscled. Only Marl was lithe and athletic.

One of the Overlords click-clacked to the human foreman of the ranch in a language which was incomprehensible to Mayhem. The foreman answered in the Purdunnese human tongue.

"The girl is here for punishment, Lord. She is the daughter of Davd Hakko, who—"

The creature click-clacked.

"Then you know about her. As for the man—" Here the foreman paused. "I'm not familiar with his case. Probably I could look into the records if you wish, Lord."

The Overlord wished.

"Your name, breeder."

"Hakko."

"And your tribe?"

"I don't know," Mayhem said. "I forgot."

"No one forgets that!" the foreman shouted angrily, reaching for the whip at his belt.

But the Overlord clacked, and the foreman said: "The Lord wishes to know how it is that you forget."

Mayhem turned around so they could see the back of his completely bald head and the thin tracing of scars there. "An injury," he said. "Afterwards, I did not remember."

He was going to turn around again, "but the Overlord's big claw closed on his neck and he felt his air cut off. He tried to rip the claw free, but it was like

trying to move a derrick with your bare hands. His vision blurred, then the pressure was gone and he slumped to the ground. He heard the Overlord clacking excitedly.

The foreman said: "Your skull was smashed. It was repaired. The repair is—unfamiliar. It was not accomplished here on Purdunn."

Mayhem managed a smile. "No, of course not. When my skull was smashed I took a mighty leap, landed in the clouds, and had my head repaired there."

"Fool! Don't be insolent."

"Well, I told you. I don't remember. You can kill me, but you can't make me remember. Don't you think I'd want to? I tell you, I was injured—and the next thing I knew, last night, I was outside here. Outside the ranch. Two guards found me. Ask them. I can't tell you any more than that."

Mayhem was playing by ear, improvising a plan as he went along. It was a deadly game and he knew it: the Overlords, suspicious of anything that deviated from the norm since revolution was pending, might decide to kill him on the spot. What he hoped, though, was that they decided to take him to Purdunn City for observation. Then, once in Purdunn City . . .

"The Lord wishes to know how you were injured."

"I knew this girl in Purdunn City," Mayhem lied, still impro-

vising. "I wished to breed with her, but not on a ranch—"

The foreman's whip whistled, and stung Mayhem's bare shoulders. "That is against the law!" he screamed.

For a moment, Mayhem saw red. But by an effort of will he calmed himself and, grinning ruefully despite the stinging pain in his shoulder, said, "That was what Davd Hara said. He called me a traitor and had me beaten. I admitted I was involved in a plan to—" Mayhem clamped his lips. "No, I will say no more. Already I have told you too much."

"A plan to what?"

Mayhem didn't answer. The Overlord click-clacked and two guards—Mayhem thought they were the guards who had brought him in the night before—took Mayhem to the center of the compound and lashed his hands to the whipping post.

The foreman's whip whistled and struck. Mayhem shuddered but said nothing. The whip struck again, the metal goads in its leather length bringing blood in regularly-spaced dots to his bare shoulders. He lost count of how many times the whip struck, but knew his back had been laid bare.

Any man but Mayhem would have screamed for mercy—but Mayhem wasn't an ordinary man. It had been the same last night, plodding forward through the terrible cold. Since Mayhem's mind was only a temporary guest in the body it inhab-

ited, it could retreat to a dark small inner semi-consciousness where the environment, even extremes of temperature or pain, receded. After a while Mayhem was hardly aware of the pain. He realized vaguely, though, that the foreman had better stop: a man could be whipped to death if the whip was wielded by a strong arm and contained metal goads.

Mayhem thought he heard peremptory clacking. Then he fainted.

He was aware of motion. He heard a voice, and the motion remained constant.

"Hakko? Hakko, are you all right?"

He saw Marl, and heard the thunder of a jet-car engine. "They're taking us to Capital City. They—they could have killed you. The Overlord stopped them. The Overlords are curious about you now."

That had been Mayhem's spur-of-the-moment plan, and apparently it had worked. He sat up and felt the pressure of tight bandages on his back. With Marl he was in the rear compartment of a jet-car. In the front compartment were three Overlords. Mayhem and Marl could talk without being overheard because of the jet-engine's thunderous roar. They put their heads close together to speak and still almost had to shout.

"Why did they take you along, Marl?"

"To nurse you. Someone had

to. I said I—loved you. What are we going to do?"

"They'll bring us before your father. If revolution is brewing, they're desperate. By now they've probably convinced themselves I was one of the key revolutionaries. Also, they're puzzled about my head."

"Where were you injured, Hakko? Who treated you?"

"I can't tell you that now."

"Does your back hurt very much?"

It hurt, all right. Mayhem said it wasn't unbearable. Then he asked, "You say the big showdown in Capital City is scheduled for tomorrow?"

"Yes."

"The Overlords know this?"

"They're not supposed to. But they have their spies among us. Probably they know."

"And if the revolution didn't start tomorrow?"

"But it's got to! It's now or never. If the Overlords are allowed time to weed out our leaders, to—"

"I mean, if it started *today*?"

Marl's eyes widened with surprise. She didn't speak, but squeezed Mayhem's hand.

The jet-car sped across the barren Purdunneese tundra.

In an hour they reached Purdunn City. It was a large metropolis with an Overlord population of half a million and an enslaved human population of almost twice that number. There were barricades in the street, and armed Overlords crawled

along everywhere. The buildings were large and domelike, with one in the exact center of the city larger than the rest. It was a truly enormous structure, a quarter of a mile in diameter and, being a hemisphere, an eighth of a mile high. This was the Overlord bastion.

As they were led from the jet-car Marl whispered, "This is one answer we don't have, Hakko. Even if we won the city, the Overlords would still have their citadel. From the outside it's impregnable."

"And from the inside?"

Marl sighed. "We could never get inside in sufficient force to take it."

Mayhem didn't answer. *He* was getting inside. And he had a weapon which could destroy the Overlord citadel. It was the one last-ditch weapon in the arsenal of the only man who could employ it, and even for Mayhem the risk was great. He had hoped he would not have to take it, for what would be certain death to a normal man might even be death to Mayhem's sentience. . . .

"What are you thinking about, Hakko?"

Mayhem didn't answer her this time either. He clamped his teeth together and felt the two lumps, one between the molars on the left side of his mouth and one on the right. The one on the left was an ultra short-wave radio-transmitter which, like radar, could penetrate a planet's Heaviside layer. The one on the

right was a small but immensely powerful atomic implosion bomb which, Mayhem knew, had tremendous power but would be contained entirely by the walls of the Overlord citadel. Such a weapon, though, wasn't used lightly, and Mayhem had taken it along only as a last-ditch resort.

Figure there were a hundred thousand Overlords in the enormous central building. Figure there were several thousand human quislings. If Mayhem set his bomb, all of them would die. True, they were the enemy—but you don't destroy even the enemy so utterly unless it is deserved. Besides, Mayhem could not set the bomb with a delayed timing device, it would have been too cumbersome. Mayhem-Hakko would have to be on hand to detonate. The result could be tricky—and deadly. Mayhem would then use the ultra short-wave radio, hoping to contact the men at the Galactic Hub who could recall his *elan*. Then, in the mili-second remaining, they would have to snatch Mayhem's sentience from Hakko's body. If they snatched it too soon, the bomb wouldn't go off. If they grabbed for it too late, Mayhem's *elan* would be destroyed in the same way that a mortal man's consciousness perishes when his body is destroyed.

No, there were many sides to the question of the ultimate weapon. Not the least of which

was Marl's father, Davd Hara, whom Mayhem had been sent to rescue. If he used the bomb his mission would fail.

One side to the question was answered for Mayhem as they neared the citadel of the Overlords on foot. Half a dozen human police and as many Overlords were driving before them a large group of human prisoners, perhaps a hundred in all. The prisoners were unarmed, their hands were over their heads, and they ranged in age from children of perhaps ten to old men. There were as many men as there were women.

A great crowd of humans had gathered in the square before the citadel to watch the proceedings. There were thousands of them, and hundreds of human police, armed and sullen, were holding them back.

"What's going on?" Mayhem asked. "Are those prisoners terrorists?"

Marl shook her head. "You mean you don't know? Where have you been all these months?"

All Mayhem said was that he didn't know.

"They're—a warning."

"A warning."

"Yes, Hakko. Every afternoon at this time a hundred human slaves are gathered at random. From all the tribes, all ages, both sexes. They're brought to the square. Then they are executed."

"But what crime did they commit?"

"No crime. It's a warning. To keep us in check."

Mayhem was speechless. He had heard of reprisals, of course, and they were bad enough. But reprisals *before* the act of terrorism, that was something he had never encountered any place, anytime. His first thought was: *this is unhuman*. Then he realized that he wasn't dealing with human beings. And apparently the Overlords just didn't feel one way or the other about killing a hundred human beings a day, merely as a warning—a method of discipline.

Now the prisoners had been lined up at the base of the front wall of the citadel. The crowd was sullen and unruly, but the police held them in check. As for the prisoners, they were doomed and knew it. They advanced like sheep to the slaughter.

A signal was given. The guards stepped back. A dozen Overlords raised long flaring-tubed weapons. At first Mayhem did not know what the weapons would do. Then he noticed the blackened base of the citadel wall.

The weapons were fired.

Soundlessly. And rays of heat are invisible. The only effect to be seen was on the prisoners. It was swift and violent.

First they turned red. Their cloaks began to smoke. The women's hair also began to smoke. They screamed and writhed. Their skin shriveled—and blackened. They commenced falling.

In a few seconds, they had been incinerated.

Marl turned away, burying her head against Mayhem's chest. "Every day," she cried. "Every day, Hakko!"

"And your father condones this?"

"He's not allowed to see it. When he's told, he doesn't believe. He has a flare for administration. They just use him. They keep him in ignorance. They . . ."

Her voice trailed off, and she was crying again. The wind had brought to them the smell from the square before the citadel.

Then their guards led them inside.

Every day, Mayhem thought. He knew he would use the implosion bomb if he had to. There was no longer any question.

Davd Hara was a big man who, as a specially privileged human, was allowed to wear trousers and a tunic. He also had a large office high up near the top of the citadel—to isolate him from contact with other humans. He even had a lock on his door, possibly the only human on Purdunn allowed one. When he opened it, he stepped back in surprise.

"Marl! Is it really you?"

"Father, I . . ."

Then the others entered the office, Mayhem first, followed by two human guards and two of the Overlords.

One of the Overlords clacked and the human interpreter ask-

ed Davd Hara: "Tell us about this man. His name is Hakko."

Davd Hara looked at Mayhem carefully. "I never saw him before in my life."

A rapid consultation between the Overlord who had spoken and the interpreter followed. The interpreter said: "You are lying. You're trying to protect your daughter."

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"This man and the girl Marl wanted to breed—in the city."

"That's ridiculous!" Davd Hara said angrily.

"Also, this man's skull was smashed by a blow that should have killed him. The damage was repaired by a science unknown to us. Therefore, it was repaired—not on Purdunn. Do you know about that too?"

"Certainly not," Davd Hara said. He looked confused.

The interpreter asked Mayhem: "Where did you go? Where did they treat you? Because if one of the free human outworlds is violating our internal affairs here on Purdunn, that is a crime against intergalactic law, and punishable."

There was another conference between interpreter and Overlord. Then the Overlord click-clacked rapidly and the interpreter said: "We have tried beating you. That didn't work. But we must get to the bottom of this, and we must get to the bottom of it now. If we beat the girl?"

Mayhem looked at Marl, who shook her head defiantly. She

did not know, of course, that now that Mayhem was within the citadel he wanted an excuse to yield.

"No," he said. "Don't. I couldn't stand that."

"Then you'll talk?"

"I—no."

"Prepare the girl for punishment."

Marl was thrust against the wall. She went proudly, her head high. Her father groaned.

"Wait," Mayhem said, despair in his voice. "I—I can't tell you. I would if I could. I don't understand astronomy. I need a star-map. I could locate the world for you. I could—"

"Ah! Then it was an out-world. How did you get there?"

"I'll tell you, when I show you."

There was another conference. Mayhem waited, hardly daring to breathe. He knew that the Purduunese were so xenophonic that they barely tolerated common knowledge of the plurality of worlds. They did not have observatories. They probably did have star-maps, but the only place they would have them would be in the few spaceships they used when contact with the outworlds was absolutely necessary. And Mayhem needed a spaceship for what he was planning.

"Very well, you who call yourself Hakko. Come."

They started to lead Mayhem from the office.

He shook his head stubbornly. "No. Either the girl and her

father come along, or I won't talk. I don't trust you. While we're gone, Marl is liable to be hurt."

"Very well. Then we'll all go."

The hot daytime wind of Purdunn swept across the broad circular roof of the citadel as Mayhem, Marl and her father, the two interpreter-police and the two Overlords walked together toward the single spaceship which dominated the roof.

It was an ungainly craft and it would long since have been placed on the scrap-heap on almost any other world in the galaxy. But for the Purduunese, who shunned space travel, it sufficed. Mayhem hoped it was capable of taking Marl and Davd Hara through the two score million miles of space to Baloy.

One of the interpreters drew his heat-gun as they approached the ship. He walked close to Marl and he had the weapon ready for use.

The other interpreter began: "Now, if you'll—"

Just then there was a distant commotion, and it brought all of them, like a magnet, to the edge of the roof. Far below, so far that its participants looked like tiny midgets, a battle was shaping up in citadel square. On one side were ranged the Purduunese in orderly ranks; on the other, their human slaves, milling, pushing forward without order, without plan. From the

height of the roof it looked as if they were milling and struggling forward to their death as, indeed, might be the case if all the humans of Capital City were not aroused to speedy common cause by some event beyond their mere strength of numbers and of desperate bravery.

Mayhem asked Marl quickly, "Didn't you say it would be tomorrow?"

"It was supposed to be tomorrow, Hakko. Tomorrow, en masse, they might have had a chance. Now—now they're going to senseless slaughter."

That much Mayhem could see. The advancing mob was being mowed down, like wheat at threshing time, by the lethal heatguns of the Purdunnese. It would take a miracle to save them, and if the miracle didn't come swiftly its coming wouldn't do them any good.

"What are you whispering about?" one of the interpreters demanded.

"I was saying," Mayhem told him, "that if you make us watch any more of this slaughter I won't even look at the star-map."

It was obvious that the Overlords were enjoying the spectacle, but a hurried conference was held and the group hastened toward the spaceship.

The hatch opened with a clang of metal on metal. The first one to enter the spaceship was Marl, followed by her father. One of the interpreter-police followed, then Mayhem and the others.

They all went down a dim companionway to the control room of the archaic spaceship, where one of the interpreters pressed a lever which lit up a large star-map of the region on one wall.

"What planet?" one of the interpreters asked.

Mayhem didn't pause at all. "That one," he said, and pointed at the little globe of light which represented nearby Baloy. It was a gamble now: if either the interpreters or the Purdunnese escaped alive, a complaint against Baloy could be brought to the Galactic Court and whatever gains were made by the human slaves of Purdunn might be forfeited.

The interpreters smiled triumphantly. If the Purdunnese recorded any emotions on what passed for their faces, Mayhem was unable to name them.

"After the revolution is crushed—" one of the interpreters began.

He didn't finish the thought. The other interpreter was listening to the Purdunnese clacking. In obedience to their command, he raised his heat-gun, whether to kill or cow the prisoners, Mayhem didn't know. Nor could he wait to find out.

He struck savagely with the edge of his hand at the interpreter's wrist. There was a sound like a wood slat breaking. The heat-gun fell and skidded away across the floor. Mayhem dove after it and felt a searing beam of heat rip air near his cheek.

He got the loose gun, whirled and fired all in one motion. The second interpreter charred and fell. Still whirling, Mayhem shot off the giant lobster claw of the nearest Purdunnese. The second one remained wisely motionless.

"To blast off," Mayhem told Marl, "you pull that lever. When everyone's out of here except you and your father, pull it. Don't wait."

"But what about you?"

"Trust me. I'll be all right."

"They'll kill you."

"Trust me. There's no time—"

"And besides, I wouldn't know how to pilot this ship, or land it, or anything—"

"Just blast off. Trust me. I'll do the rest."

"But—"

Mayhem ignored her protests and motioned with the heat-gun. The one remaining interpreter, his wrist broken, led the way outside. The wounded Purdunnese followed him. The second one turned to go.

And struck at Mayhem, lightning fast, with the oversized claw of his race.

Mayhem felt blinding pain as he fired point-blank. The Purdunnese was killed instantly, but Mayhem knew that all the arteries and veins in his left arm had been severed. Blood spurted in jets. . . .

The interpreter and the remaining Purdunnese fled. Mayhem didn't chase them.

"I must help you, Hakko . . ."

"No. Go as I told you. That lever—"

"You can barely stand."

Mayhem staggered toward the companionway, the hatch.

When he reached the rooftop, the slave-police were pounding across it toward him. He fired once, then the heat-gun was empty. He flung it aside and plunged behind the spaceship, giddy now with loss of blood.

He backed away. If Marl blasted off, there was a chance. The flare of blastoff might blind his pursuers long enough for him to get down into the building. He had to be enclosed, or the atomic implosion would kill every inhabitant of Capital City. If Marl didn't blast off, Mayhem would be killed in a matter of seconds . . .

He was going to die anyway, from loss of blood. His death didn't matter, if only she could understand that.

There was a rushing roar, an incandescent glow. In the first split-second, Mayhem shut his eyes and turned away. When he looked again, the spaceship was rising on its pillar of flame.

Then he didn't look any more, but sprinted for the exit from the roof. Blindly fired heat-beams charred the roof-top. Once Mayhem fell. A lethargy overcame him at once. He could barely rise and recognized the danger: he might lose consciousness from loss of blood before he could act.

Somehow he got to his feet. Already the spaceship was hardly more than a dot in the sky.

He reached the exit, plunged down.

Almost, he forgot the radio message. Then, remembering: "Mayhem calling Hub, calling Hub. Unmarked Purdunne ship blasted off from Purdunn with Davd Hara. Guide it . . . Baloy . . . radar beam. Mayhem signing off—no!" His mind was wandering. "About to implode. Grab *elan* or I'll die."

He ran down five more steps, and stumbled.

A giant lobster-like shape arose, loomed, struck.

"Now!" Mayhem croaked hoarsely, and bit down on the implosion bomb.

Days later, on Baloy, Patricia MacKenzie told Marl:

"Your father is going to be all right."

"And as for the revolution on Purdunn, it's a success. It wouldn't have been, though, if the citadel hadn't been blown up. The Purdunne could have resisted there indefinitely, and, with their superior arms, might even have won the day."

"Some day you can go back. Now your father needs you."

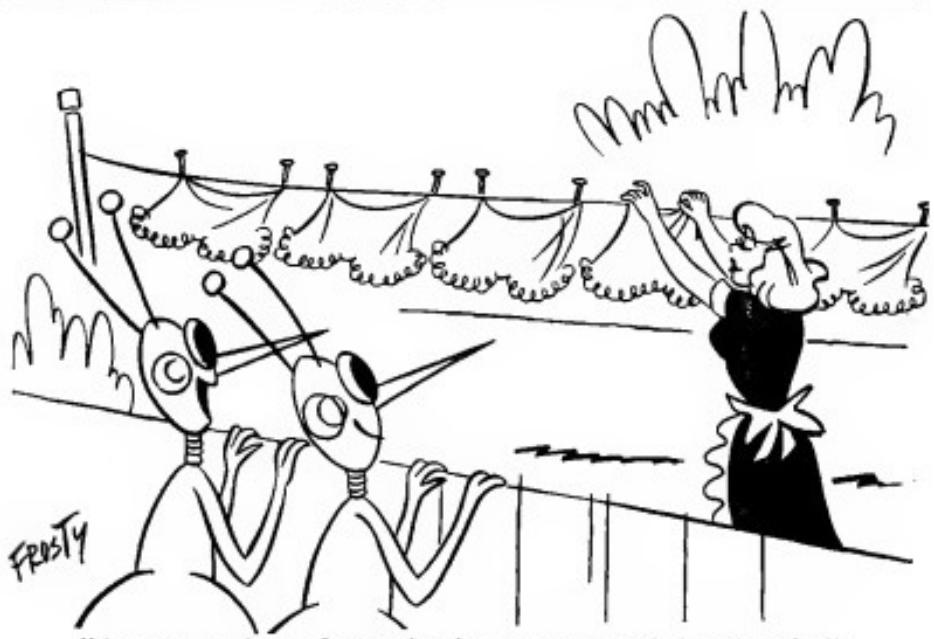
"No, ma'am. Not that. I want to find out—Hakko! What happened to Hakko?"

"Hakko? Oh, you mean Mayhem. He lives—to help us again. The report just came in from the hub of the galaxy. Whenever Mayhem is needed again, wherever he's needed, he'll go."

"I don't understand."

So Patricia MacKenzie told Marl the Johnny Mayhem legend. It was quite a story.

THE END



"As near as I can figure they're some sort of signal code."

Space Is For Suckers

By P. F. COSTELLO

ILLUSTRATOR LLEWELLYN

Here's a good fast action story about people you sympathize with in a situation where they certainly need all the sympathy they can get. But you'd better take it with a grain of salt. After all mushrooms without salt can taste pretty flat.

NORMA leaned her back wearily against the thick trunk of the glossy green toadstool and, after a moment, let her back slide down the oily surface until she was sitting on the thick lawn of pine trees, a jaundiced carpet that spread unbroken in every direction.

Overhead, past the evil brown ceiling of the toadstool, vermillion clouds floated lazily in a purple sky. Norma looked up at them, beyond them to infinity, forlornly. Then, crying at last, she closed her eyes and let her head sink into her arms.

She was lost.

Not only had she not found her way to town—as Jed had warned her!—but now she didn't have the remotest idea which way to go to get home.

In every direction, evenly spaced like pillars in some pew-

less cathedral of Hell, rose the yard thick glistening green trunks of the toadstools. All identical. All going up fifteen feet to the monstrous bloated umbrella.

A flock of over a hundred pterodactyls came darting this way and that around the toadstools, to alight around her and hop clumsily, pausing every few hops to cock their heads sideways, uttering their piping cry, and now and then stabbing their beaks deeply beneath the pines and pulling it out stained blue from the soil, and with a small, screaming bundle of fur and legs clutched like some laboratory specimen in their beak. Then—always—they tossed it a few feet in the air, uttered a shrill triumphant shriek, and moved their head out lefthandedly as though about to snap it



The creature laughed and she fled in terror.

off, and caught the poor *fibble* right smack in their throat and swallowed at the same time, so that the *fibble* hit their stomach practically still in free fall.

One of the pterodactyls cocked its head sideways and stared unblinking at Norma for a second or two, as though debating whether she could be torn apart into bitesize pieces. It was no bigger than a robin would be, back on Earth. Then, mentally discarding her, it hopped on, on seemingly broken legs, its parchment wings half flapping independently.

A moment later the whole flock took to the air again, and in a moment were gone.

Norma wept on, oblivious to that fact that the pterodactyls had been there. If she had known, she would have only wept the harder, because she hated the gimlet-eyed little robbers.

She wept, and finally she wailed aloud, sobbing in anger, in self pity, in hopelessness, in tune with the fluctuations of her despondency.

And the greenish yellow eyes in the head that poked around the thick green trunk of a toadstool fifteen feet away stared at her, with wonder at first, then with mocking amusement, while the pointed ears cocked this way and that as though savoring the sounds of her sobbing.

As Norma continued to cry, oblivious to her surroundings, the intruder stepped out from

the concealment of the timber toadstool. His skin was a bright red. He wore no clothing except a pair of short trunks that were a faded brown streaked with blue dirt. He was the size of an average ten-year-old boy, and his tawny eyes held the light of a ten-year-old bent on mischief.

A few feet from her, he suddenly darted toward her. At the same instant she became aware of his presence, and screamed at the top of her lungs in pure terror.

Clawing her way to her feet she ran. When she could run no more, and could stumble forward no longer, she sprawled forward, moaning with terror, awaiting whatever fate was to come. When nothing happened she finally gained courage to half rise and look around.

She was alone. There was only the forest of regularly spaced timber toadstools and the never ending lawn of incredibly small pine trees, a sickly green carpet that symbolized for her the diseased mockery of Earth and all it represented.

That fiend out of Hell—had it been a nightmare creature of her own thoughts? Or had it been real. It must have been real, and if it were real she could understand now why Jed wouldn't take her anywhere, and why the Contract had explicitly stated she had to remain in the house of the husband of her choice, and its immediate surroundings, until her first child was born.

If she could only get home she would do that, now.

Finally enough strength came to her so she could get to her feet. She had to keep going. She chose a direction at random. Surprisingly soon she saw the house.

Home. An oversize mockery of Lincolniana hewn of toadstool logs with a roof of blue slate shingles that lay with machine flatness but whose uneven edges carried out the inescapable spirit of the fungoid.

She had hated it, but now she stumbled toward it with a glad cry. It was home. At one corner of the house was the fairyland garden Jed had planted for her, a clustering of tall, fragile mushrooms varying in height from six to twenty feet, and in color from leprous white to an impossible pastel shade of purple. With the bloated red sun shining on it just right it looked like a distant dream city, a Shangri-La. Norma had loved it for three days when she had first arrived. Now, as she stumbled toward it, she loved it again. The way the sunlight reflected from the tall stems gave the impression of lighted windows in fairy skyscrapers.

Only when she got closer did the illusion vanish and the garden become just mushrooms. Then the smell came back, settling into her mind, coating the insides of her nostrils like warm glue. Jed had said a million times that in a year she couldn't

smell it any more. It had been nine months now. The fungus stench was driving her out of her mind. That, and the loneliness.

She skirted the mushroom garden. At the door she turned and looked back the way she had come. Proxima, evilly red and twice as big as Sol, floated lightly atop a distant timber toadstool like a red globe on a green pedestal. The toadstools went in rows to the horizon like parking meters in an empty parking lot on Sunday.

But on Terra Two there were no Sundays. . . .

Sighing, she turned and pushed open the door.

Jed had promised to fix that split plank in the door. Damn the pithy no good toadstool wood that was like grained cork and split open when it dried out and shrunk.

Inside, Norma slammed the door, venting her anger on it. The crack in the center plank lengthened and widened. Three inches thick and even a girl could break it in two with her bare hands!

The dull thud of the door slamming woke Jingo. He jumped off the davenport and came to greet her, and three feet away from her he gently tucked his long snouted head between his front legs and summersaulted, then looked up for signs of approval of his one trick. Not seeing any, he did his trick again.

"Oh, Jingo," Norma said, taking pity on him.

At the sound of her voice he wagged his body with joy.

Norma grinned wanly and, making the effort, kicked at him. He watched her foot come toward him with a lazy, playful light in his golden eyes for the split second it took for her foot to almost connect with him. Then he became a blur of motion, gracefully arching so that he turned the violent kick into a gentle caress.

Jed said Jingo was the highest form of life native to Terra Two, and so closely related to the mongoos in India that they could probably mate. It lived mostly on *fibbles*, except when she broke down and gave it milk. Then it let the *fibbles* crawl through the walls and invade the pantry. So it was a choice of enduring Jingo's plaintive blipping for milk, or listening to the squeeks of the *fibbles* and watching their tarantula-like furry bodies dart across the floor.

Jed always said she spoiled Jingo.

Jed would be home soon! Norma hurried to the kitchen, Jingo darting around her feet in one of his silent games, and put two slabs of mushroom in the broiler.

She was covering the almost done mushroom slabs with bacon for the final stage of broiling when Jed came in. Jingo forsook her and bounded out of the kitchen. A moment later Jed stood in the doorway, Jingo curled in his arms.

Jed Belmont was tall, broad-shouldered, with unruly black hair and a strong chin. His eyes were pale blue, and his skin still had a faint tan, even after six years on Terra Two. His mouth was small—or perhaps it only seemed small because his chin was large.

"Here, Norma," he said, squatting down beside her. "Let me take care of the steaks. You go sit down. You shouldn't be moving around any more than you have to."

He tried to kiss her. She turned her head away.

"Go wash up," she said in a flat voice.

"But . . ." Jed compressed his lips, then straightened up and left the kitchen as he'd been directed.

When he came back, freshly shaven, Jingo still draped on his shoulders, Norma was lifting the mushroom slabs out of the broiler.

"And why shouldn't I be walking around?" Norma picked up the conversation.

"You know why," Jed said gently. "You have to take care of yourself."

"Sure," Norma mocked, pushing her hair back with her wrist and relinquishing the plates rather than have a tug of war with them. "I have to take care of myself," she mimicked.

She went over to the table and sat down. Jed took a spoon and scooped some of the rich, savory juices left in the broiler onto the browned mushroom slabs.

"I tried to walk to town today," Norma said quietly.

Jed dropped the spoon in the broiler.

"Why did you do that?" he said angrily.

"Because I'm sick of this damned planet!" Norma shouted. Then, dispiritedly, "I never swore until I came here."

"I know it's tough for you," Jed said, putting all the sympathy he could muster into his voice. "But—"

"*I'll get used to it,*" Norma mimicked. "*I'll never* get used to it. I hate it, I hate it, I hate it. Oh, how they glamorized this stinking place back on Earth! The New Frontier! Be the wife of one of Civilization's Pioneers!"

Jed set a steaming plate in front of her. She pushed it away. "I don't want to eat," she said. She began to sniffle. "I got suckered into it," she said. "And you got me pregnant in a hurry! You knew the glamor would wear off in a hurry!" She glared at him.

He glanced away uncomfortably and said, "You'll get use . . ." His voice drifted off. Sighing, he took his own plate and sat down.

"They lied," Norma shuddered. "*The Government of the United States lied!*" She shook her head in wonder. "They had us scratching each other's eyes out for the chance to come here!"

"Better eat your supper," Jed said gruffly.

Norma placed her elbows on the table and doubled her fists.

"If I could just get back there and tell the truth," she said. "If I could just get back there . . ." It was a threat.

"But you can't," Jed said matter-of-factly. "Besides, you know you don't want to. The baby."

"I don't want my baby here," Norma said. She leaned forward, placing her hand on Jed's arm. "Please, Jed. Get them to let me go back. I won't say a word. I promise. Surely they can let *just one* go back, out of all the thousands. What difference would it make to them?"

"You know you can't," Jed said, staring at his plate. "Even if I agreed, it wouldn't do a bit of good. You signed the agreement. Five years. It's legal. And besides, I love you, Norma."

"Sure," Norma whispered. "Did you pick me out of a crowd? Did you choose me out of all the girls in the world? No. You took what they handed you. You would have loved a buck-toothed moron with skirts if that's what you got."

Jed flushed and kept silent. What she said was too uncomfortably close to the truth. A man had to be on Terra Two five years before he could have a wife. He had to clear his six hundred and forty acres and sow it with pine trees to keep down the wild fungoids. He had to grow his timber toadstools in

flats, and set them out in the field when they got to be a foot tall. He had to find out the truth about Terra Two—all the truth.

After he had done all that he could apply for a wife. And by that time, as Norma said, a buck-toothed moron in skirts would do. If that's all there was to choose.

He looked at Norma. Beautiful. Naturally wavy brown hair. Perfect teeth and full red lips. Expressive brown—almost black—eyes, when they weren't beat from too much crying. Beautiful. Wonderful.

Maybe a buck-toothed moron would have been a better choice.

"Your steak is getting cold," he said.

"Steak!" Norma said. "Huh!"

With skirts.

Norma took a reluctant bite of grilled mushroom. She hated the taste of it, even tempered with the flavor of bacon. But it was like a habit forming drug to her.

At first she had loved it. There was a government cookbook with one thousand recipes for things made from mushrooms. She had learned how to make mushroom flour and mushroom egg substitute, and had felt it a major triumph when she made her first angel food cake. It had had just the very faintest hint of mushroom flavor. Its texture and color had been perfect.

But after seven days of nothing but mushrooms, mushroom griddle cakes, mushroom mush

with mushroom milk substitute on it, sweetened with saccharin cut with mushroom flour to the sweetness of sugar, eggs with whites and yolks that cooked and tasted like regular hen eggs but were made from two kinds of mushroom gelatin with artificial flavoring, and artificial coloring in the yolks (what a triumph it had been for her to make her first batch of six dozen eggs!), mushroom biscuits, mushroom steaks, mushroom pot roast, and mushroom ice cream with synthetic flavoring and coloring in it, Norma had tired somewhat of mushrooms and had asked Jed (not expecting her request to be granted) for one meal with absolutely nothing mushroomish about it.

It was as though he had been waiting for it to happen. He had grinned, nodded, and left the house—to return in ten minutes with a box of frozen foods that had name brands familiar to any supermarket shopper who lived on Earth.

"You've been holding out on me!" Norma had exclaimed in delight.

"All for you," Jed had said.

She had insisted he share with her. He had compromised. He wanted a good mushroom steak, but he would take some of the asparagus and whole kernel corn with it. He was nuts!

Norma had had a field day. Fried chicken, shrimp cocktail with real cocktail sauce, whole wheat toast, real butter on it.

She had stuffed herself until she couldn't eat another bite.

And she was still hungry.

Well, the thing to do was to eat some more if she was still hungry. She had loaded her plate again.

And stared at it.

And stared at it.

She hadn't consciously realized what she was about to do until the crash of Jed's chair falling over shocked her back to awareness and she saw him reaching desperately for her.

But it was too late.

Jed cleaned up the sour smelling mess and washed her face with a cold wet washcloth.

Then the heady aroma of his cold mushroom steak drifted into her cleansed nostrils, and against her conscious will, her very soul screaming in protest, she had gobbled—yes, gobbled up—the rest of his mushroom steak.

Just a few bites, really. But it had satisfied her hunger,

And Jed had laughed his head off, damn him.

Burning at the memory, Norma began eating in earnest.

"I'll tell you one thing, *Mister Belmont*," Norma said, brushing the hair out of her eyes with her wrist, "when the baby comes I'm through with you."

"Even if I have to cut my throat!"

She pushed another large chunk of mushroom steak into her mouth and started chewing.

"Damn it!" Jed said suddenly,

ly, and hit the table with the flat of his hand.

Norma became very still, watching things on the table bounce around and clatter loudly.

"What did you say?" she asked very sweetly.

"I said damn it!" Jed said. "Why do I have to be the one stuck with a sniveling baby, a la de da spoilsport, a—"

"Yeah?" Norma shouted. "Anyone who doesn't let you and the Government of the United States trick her, lie to her, and use her without protest is 'a sniveling baby and a spoilsport,' huh? Yes, you, Mister Belmont with the lumberjack jaw. You are a liar and a cheat, and you don't like it when I stop pretending you aren't a liar and a cheat, do you Mister Belmont?"

"Why, you . . ." Jed leaned across the table, his right hand uplifted, his lips a grim line.

"Go ahead and hit me," Norma said. "Go ahead, you yellow belly. Better yet, kick me in the stomach and kill the baby. You might as well. If it looks anything like you I'll kill it myself. Go ahead!" She sneered at him. "Lantern jaw," she mocked.

She tossed her head defiantly, then brushed her hair back from her eyes with her wrist.

Jed slowly sat down, his face almost black, his eyes filled with frustrated rage.

"It was a lot of fun tricking me into becoming a mushroom addict, wasn't it?" Norma said serenely. "Good joke. You laugh-

ed your head off. When my five years are up and they have to take me back to Earth I'll have to sell my soul like a girl who is a drug addict to get the money to buy up all the mushrooms in the supermart every day—or do they have a Mushrooms Anonymous for refugees from Sierra Sue's Terra Two?"

Norma smiled sweetly.

"And don't think you're fooling me one bit with your dark secrets about Terra Two. I'm not exactly the buck-toothed moron you think I am. I know why we were married, along with five hundred other couples, out in the middle of nowhere, and you brought me straight to your stinking timber farm in an air taxi without so much as one day of sightseeing in town."

"It's nothing. Not worth seeing," Jed mumbled.

"You're a liar," Norma said. She snorted. "I know all about it. You and your lies. So Jingo is the highest form of life on Terra Two! That's one of your lies. So much like a mongoos that they could probably mate, huh." She sneered at Jed. "Well, I have news for you." She put on a smug expression.

"What news?" Jed asked cautiously, holding his breath.

"You'll find out," Norma said. "You just might not be the father of my baby."

"What?" Jed said, half rising from his chair.

"That's right," Norma said. "Surely you aren't naive enough to believe a girl who would

marry you sight unseen, practically, and dive into bed with you, would have la de da scruples against doing the same thing with anyone who might visit her while her husband is away all day working, are you?" she purred.

Jed stared at her.

Norma pursed her lips and drew circles on the table with her finger.

"He was a real devil," she said smugly. "If you get what I mean . . ."

Jed continued to stare at her intently, saying nothing. Suddenly his expression softened. Pity came into his eyes and was quickly hidden.

"You're sure trying your damnedest to get me to hate you, aren't you," he said sympathetically. He shook his head slowly, marveling.

Norma burst into tears. And when Jed came around the table and tried to put his arms around her she shook him off and said, "Get away from me! Don't come near me!"

Jed stood looking down at her for a minute, a baffled expression on his face. Then he began clearing the table. When he was at the sink, Norma got up and left the kitchen.

Jed watched her go, then washed the dishes. Jingo, napping contentedly in his favorite corner, didn't move.

When Jed had put everything away he stood in the kitchen doorway for a moment, survey-

ing everything to make sure he hadn't overlooked anything.

In the living room Jingo caught up with him and looked around eagerly for Norma. She wasn't there. With a worried frown Jed hurried to the bedroom. The door was closed.

And locked from the inside.

Norma heard Jed try the door. Then there was a long period of silence outside the door while she held her breath, waiting for the crash of his fist through the flimsy panel.

Instead, after a while, she heard him go away, and felt a stab of disappointment.

The next minute it was a different kind of stab. One that made her suddenly afraid and want to cry out to Jed to come back. His name trembled on her lips. Instead, she gritted her teeth and endured it.

The pain didn't last long. And it was not the pain, but its meaning, that brought the sheen of perspiration to her forehead.

Suddenly she wanted Jed with her. Oh, how she wanted him with her. But she wasn't going to call him. She wasn't going to unlock the door. She would die before she would.

And what an awful place to die. No good honest worms to eat your flesh in the grave on this horrible planet. Probably your casket became an underground mushroom cellar and your body the soil they grew on.

Why did the government want to colonize such a place? It was no good. And they knew it. The

sun here didn't have enough ultraviolet rays, just mostly red and infrared, and green vegetation hadn't evolved.

Jed had explained about the pine trees. They had brought a few pounds each of the seeds of a lot of different types of plants from Earth to see if they could grow. Most of them hadn't. The pine seeds had produced stunted little pine shrubs, and in two years after they sprouted they produced an enormous crop of little pine cones no bigger than the end of a finger, each one loaded with new seeds about the size of the head of a pin. When they planted these the new crop of pine trees weren't more than three inches high when they went to seed. Little things, still looking exactly like a pine when you looked at them through a magnifying glass, but more like grass underfoot when you walked on it.

It wasn't ever going to get big enough to produce lumber. But it did have a use. Where it grew no fungoids would grow, unless you got them started elsewhere and planted them, clearing out the pine trees for a foot around them and sweetening the soil with lime.

So they were clearing the best land with the aid of pine trees, and the farmers were growing timber toadstools that made a pithy kind of wood. The green in them wasn't chlorophyl but just a color pigment.

Toadstools and mushrooms

big as trees, pine trees so small they were like grass, peterodactyls the size of bluejays, and a thing called a fibble that was all legs and looked like a hairy spider but was really a warm-blooded, harmless animal that liked to burrow in the soft ground and also liked to explore every dark corner.

And those red devils. They really were devils. She had seen them before, but never as close up as that one today. They weren't human. That much was certain.

Why hadn't Jed ever mentioned them? They were obviously the native intelligent species, and probably there were a lot of them. Why did the government not say anything about them? Why didn't Jed let her go into town? She knew there was a town not more than a few miles away.

Jed didn't want her to see any of the red devils. And she really got under his skin with her hints that maybe one of them was the father of her child.

Pain descended again. Norma gritted her teeth, and groaned aloud. This time the sheen of sweat on her face was from the pain itself.

"Jed!" she called sharply.

She listened. He was just outside the door. She knew he was there. Why didn't he break the door down and come in.

The pain came again. She tried not to groan.

Then she heard Jed walk away.

He wasn't going to come in. He hadn't even tried the door again.

A minute later she saw a light outside. It was Jed, with a flashlight. He was going away, leaving her alone, deserting her.

So her marriage to Jed was ended. He had walked out on her. She had never realized that men could be so cruel. Maybe she had it coming to her, the way she had acted; but couldn't Jed have had a little mercy? To desert her now . . .

After a long time the pain came again.

She fainted.

"I think she'll be all right," a strange voice said.

"Those screams!" Jed's voice sounded, far away.

"I doubt that she was aware of making them," the strange voice said. "She's a strong healthy woman."

"One of the finest," a strange female voice said. "And don't you forget it!"

Norma opened her eyes. Things were blurred. One shadowy figure was tall and straight, like Jed. She concentrated on it, and slowly it settled into concrete form.

Jed, unsmiling, stern, unrelenting even now—and with something strange in his eyes. Way back in them.

Suddenly a baby started to cry, and she saw Jed flinch as though struck by a whip.

"My baby!" Norma cried, trying to sit up.

A hand pressed her back. The stranger said, "Don't try to sit up."

"But my baby!" Norma said. "I want my baby."

She looked at the doctor, then up at Jed. Jed's jaw jutted out. The sick look in his eyes was a soul sickness.

"Is something wrong?" Norma said, looking back to the doctor.

"Prepare yourself for a shock, my dear," the doctor said gently. He hesitated, then said, "All right, nurse."

The starched figure of a woman appeared, a small bundle wrapped in cloth in her arms. The same sick look was in the nurse's eyes, but more concealed.

Unable to breathe, Norma watched while the nurse leaned over toward her and pulled back the cloth.

How red babies are! Norma thought. Then her mind registered everything. The pointed ears, small and fragile and intensely red. Eyes of golden fire. Dainty, shell-like fingernails that were pointed . . .

Absolute shock transfixed her.

Then she became aware of the stares of the nurse and the doctor—and Jed.

"Oh, no!" Norma said. "I know what you're thinking, but it isn't so. I know it isn't so. I would know, wouldn't I? Or can they cast spells so you don't know? Please, Jed. What I said at supper isn't true. I would die first. I hate—"

The nurse's face wreathed with smiles. "It's all right!" she said. "It's your baby. All babies on Two are like this. It's the way it is, you know. They don't know why. The mushroom diet, the different sun, the planet itself, no one knows why. But he's your son—and Mister Belmont's. A healthy, normal boy. Just like all the others born here—or maybe more beautiful, more intelligent."

She held the baby down closer. Norma looked at it again, against her will. She searched for things familiar. A suggestion of Jed's chin was there. The baby yawned, and its little arms moved.

It was a real baby, all right. *Her baby.*

The wonder of it struck her.

She curved her arm. The nurse carefully laid the baby beside her in the crook of her arm. She twisted her head to look at it, her newfound motherlove transforming every detail into terms of perfection.

She felt a heavy hand on her other shoulder.

"All right?" Jed's voice sounded, strangely tense.

Not taking her eyes from her son, she nodded. "All right," she said dreamily. Then, abruptly, she turned to look at him, anger flaring in her. "But you didn't have to trick me into it. It would have been fairer—"

"I only did what I had to!" Jed groaned.

"No, no," the doctor said.

(Continued on page 86)

PROPHECY, INC.

By ROG PHILLIPS

ILLUSTRATOR MARTINEZ



Are next week's newspapers already printed? Are the momentous events of the next ten years already ancient history somewhere beyond range of our senses?

*Author Phillips says
—could be.*

THE frosted glass of the door bore the legend, *Dr. M. G. Freehurst & Associates*, and the number 1428-36. Earl Baker, tall, dark-haired, and slim, in neatly tailored dark suit, hesitated briefly, then pushed open the door and went in.

There was a small, luxuriously furnished waiting room, and a sliding glass panel behind which he could see the rich auburn hair of a girl.

Earl glanced at his wrist-watch. "I'm supposed to have an appointment with Dr. Freehurst for three o'clock," he said. "And I seem to be right on time."

The girl consulted a list. "You are Mr. Baker?" she asked. "Please be seated. Dr. Freehurst will see you in a few moments."

Earl Baker glanced at his watch again and frowned. "I didn't request this appointment," he said. "Dr. Freehurst did. I'm rather busy . . ."

"Please wait," the girl said. "Something unexpected came up but the doctor will be able to see you in just a little while. Believe me, it's for your best interests."

"My name's Linda Parnell."

"Okay, Linda, maybe I'll wait. But what's it about? I can't figure it out. I get a call from this Dr. Freehurst saying it's a matter of life and death—*my* life and death—for me to be here. Frankly, I think it's some new selling technique. I probably wouldn't have come at all, but being a business man myself, I'm always interested in new sales techniques."

"I'll have to let Dr. Freehurst tell you what it's about," Linda said. "I can assure you, though, that it isn't a new selling technique."

"Then what is it?" Earl Baker asked bluntly. "The name on the door doesn't tell anything. What do you deal in? And don't tell me you don't know!" He smiled to take the hostility out of his remark.

A buzzer sounded under the desk. "Excuse me," Linda said, pushing down the toggle pin of an intercom.

"Has Mr. Baker come in?" a pleasantly deep male voice asked. "Send him in if he has."

"You may go in now," Linda said, smiling her relief.

Earl Baker nodded but made no motion to move toward the door marked private. Instead he repeated his question. "What do you deal in here?"

"Prophecy," Linda said. "Specialized prophecy."

Earl Baker blinked, then laughed. "Look into your crystal ball while I'm in there and see if I'm taking you to dinner tonight," he said as he turned away and went toward the inner door.

Max Freehurst was a small man with a bulging forehead and thin blond hair combed neatly back. He wore a slightly harassed expression covered by a forced smile as he came out from behind his desk to shake hands with Earl Baker. While they shook hands he looked up at the taller

man's face with a thoughtful, blinking intentness.

"Please sit down, Mr. Baker," he said. "I have a great deal of explaining to do and you will probably have some questions to ask. First, I asked you to come here because all the indications are that you will be murdered shortly, and we would like to prevent that if possible. To do so we must have your cooperation."

"Murdered?" Earl Baker said. "Me?" He sat down slowly, studying Max Freehurst's face. "You're joking! Uh, when?"

Max went around his desk and sat down. "Two weeks from today," he said. "Now, before you ask more questions, please listen to what I have to say."

"All right," Earl said, sitting back and leisurely lighting a cigarette.

"We, my associates and I," Max Freehurst began, "have a definite and scientific technique for looking into the future. I will go into it later, but first I want to give you a picture of how the future works from the present. Unlike the past, the future is by no means fixed and unalterable. It can be changed, and is being changed all the time. New factors enter into a picture and alter it."

"There is a geometric progression of uncertainty involved whose underlying principles are still unknown to us. Let me give you an example. Today it is quite certain that it will start raining outside at three thirty-two." He

glanced at his watch. "Twenty-five minutes from now. You will be able to look out my window here and see it start to rain right on schedule. Yet two weeks ago this was quite uncertain. There was a ten percent chance it would rain, and the time was unknown. A week ago there was a seventy percent chance it would rain, but the time indicated was later in the evening. Three days ago the chances of rain were eighty percent, and the time it would start outside these windows was forty percent settled at three thirty-two, which made it a practical certainty." Max Freehurst smiled. "That's one reason I wanted to have you over here at three, so you could see a demonstration of prophecy in action. It is important that you actually see it."

"How does it work?" Earl Baker asked.

"By a form of hypnosis, aided by certain new drugs. We first used these methods to send a subject back into his past in order to get at psychoses. We supposed, naturally, that we were merely tapping the subject's memory, but little things developed that led us to believe even total recall wouldn't explain all that came out. Finally, by a method of confusing the subject as to what time is the present, we were able to make him *recall* the future. Once we were able to do this, the rest followed. Today we have a team of fifty full-time subjects who range over the coming few weeks all the time. We coordinate what they bring back,

the agreements and disagreements about what happens."

"As simple as that," Earl Baker said.

"Not simple," Max Freehurst said, his troubled expression returning. "There are complications. We try to limit the excursions to the first few weeks of the unrolling future so that no subject under hypnosis risks going past the point in time of his death, and we try to keep a cross check going to avoid that, but sometimes . . ." With an effort he forced himself away from whatever troubled him.

"Today is May fourteenth," Max said. "The newspapers of May twenty-ninth carry the headlines of your murder on the twenty-eighth, two weeks from today."

"Who kills me?" Earl Baker said, grinning, but with worried lights in his brown eyes.

Dr. Freehurst shrugged his shoulders. "The papers state that an arrest will be made within twenty-four hours, but they don't according to the next day's papers. That's why I contacted you and asked you to come here to my office. What we would like to do is find out the identity of the killer—potential killer at this point—and work to prevent it."

"But if it's going to happen how can you change that?" Earl Baker asked.

"We are a new factor entering the picture," Max Freehurst said. "The information I am giving you is a new factor. If your

knowing someone will try to kill you on the twenty-eighth is enough of a factor to prevent your murder, then tomorrow morning's hypnotic session will show no news of your death in the papers of the twenty-eighth. Do you have any notion of who might want to kill you?"

"Not the slightest!" Earl Baker said.

"Nor any motive?"

"None." Earl Baker frowned in thought. "Oh, I could conjure up reasons. How was I killed?"

"You were shot. Two shots, one through the head and one through the chest."

"Where was I?" Earl Baker said, his voice showing his growing nervousness.

Max Freehurst smiled without humor. "Either at your office or just after getting out of your car at home or at some unknown place, with your body dumped from a moving car in Franklin Park. All three show equal appearance in the papers as seen from yesterday."

Earl Baker said nothing. Freehurst broke the silence.

"I have a feeling for these things," he said quietly. "I think your death at an unknown place derives from our entering the picture, and that tomorrow the other two methods or places will disappear as possibilities. The pattern of shifting possibility goes like that. Probably your body will be reported as being found in several different places, but in all cases dumped from a car after you're dead."

"If this is all baloney . . ." Earl Baker said threateningly.

"It isn't," Max said. "What happened day before yesterday?"

"I don't know. Why?" Earl Baker said.

"It seems probable the factor determining your murder came into existence then. Before that, the newspapers of the twenty-ninth had nothing about you in them at all."

"I can't imagine what it would be," Earl Baker said.

"Look!" Max Freehurst said, pointing to the window. "That pigeon. It's twenty-eight minutes after three. That pigeon will remain there until it starts to rain. Then a gust of wind will rattle the window, startling it, and it will fly away."

Both men became silent, watching the pigeon, as the minute hand of the clock on the wall approached 3:32.

At 3:31 the pigeon cocked its head coyly as though aware of its place in destiny, made as though to spread its wings and fly away, upsetting prophecy—and changed its mind.

At ten seconds before 3:32 the first raindrop fell, then another, then a dozen.

The window rattled loudly. The pigeon flew away.

"What happened day before yesterday?" Dr. Freehurst said.

Earl Baker pulled his attention from the spring cloudburst outside the window. "What?" he said vaguely, then, with a visible effort at concentration, "lots of

things, I suppose. What are you looking for?"

"I don't know," Max said. "Maybe things like changing your will, telling your wife you were going to divorce her, a fight with your business partner. Big, crucial things that could start a murder motivation in someone. Or little things. It's quite possible that what happened day before yesterday didn't happen in your presence, like the potential killer learning from someone else the thing that makes him or her want to kill you. It could even be something like a business deal that won't develop a murder motive for someone until the last day."

"Hmm," Earl Baker said slowly. "That was the twelfth, Tuesday. I'm not married. Divorced three years ago. My wife remarried. Nothing there. Changed my will after she remarried, leaving everything to my sister in Montana. Nothing there."

"Tell me about yourself," Max Freehurst said. "All I know about you is what I and my associates read about you in the papers of two weeks from now."

"Well, I'm thirty-one, born here in Chicago, went to Northwestern and got my degree in business administration, went to work for Allied Industries, parlayed a thousand dollars into a quarter of a million on the stock exchange in five years, as a hobby, meanwhile marrying Alice for two years, then being rudely awakened to the fact that she couldn't be true to any man

for long. I got that out of my hair three years ago, took a look at my life, and decided I had worked for someone else long enough.

"I quit Allied, took a partner in a garage venture that has paid off well, took two brothers as partners in a restaurant venture that has built up into a chain of ten restaurants, have built a nucleus of rental housing that is paying for itself. I live in the one in Winetka, with a couple who act as servants there, with the man looking after my other houses. Good couple.

"I have my office here in the Loop, where you got in touch with me. A receptionist and a bookkeeper. Nothing there. The receptionist is married and her husband works for a firm of architects in the same building. The bookkeeper is a family man. That about covers it. No girl friends with a claim on me, no one I've harmed financially or otherwise—that I know of."

Max Freehurst nodded slowly. "Considering any new business ventures?"

"Oh, of course. All the time. As a matter of fact, day before yesterday—" Earl Baker stopped, his eyes widening.

"Yes?" Dr. Freehurst said.

Earl Baker shook his head. "Uh uh," he said. "Couldn't possibly be anything there. An inventor with a novelty gadget, and I half-promised to put up the money for a factory to manufacture it. I'm going to do it, but I

didn't commit myself yet. I've had in mind starting a factory to manufacture various things, and this crystallizes it."

"Who's the inventor?" Max Freehurst asked.

"A man named George Mason," Earl Baker said. "But there couldn't possibly be anything there. I'm going to give him a much better deal than he hopes for. What he wants is either ten thousand cash for the patents or a straight royalty deal."

"What are you going to give him?"

"Half interest in about thirty thousand dollars' worth of factory—a forty-nine percent interest—plus a royalty and a salaried job as general manager."

"Why so generous?" Max Freehurst said.

"That's my formula," Earl said. "I invest in men, not gadgets. George Mason has plenty on the ball. All it needs is someone like me to harness it and not let it go to waste."

"Now that you've remembered that," Max Freehurst said, "what else can you recall about day before yesterday?"

"That's all there was."

"Then we have to consider that the most likely place to start in uncovering our potential murderer," Max said.

"But he wouldn't—" Earl began.

"Not necessarily him," Max said. "Someone connected with him, possibly, or with his gadget. What is the gadget, by the way?"

"Well," Earl said, "I promised to keep it secret. Damn it, if it hadn't rained, if that pigeon hadn't done what you said it would . . . This whole thing has me off balance."

"We have two weeks to work on it," Max Freehurst said. "I'd like to see the results of tomorrow morning's hypnotic session to see if our conference has materially affected the probabilities. So why don't we let things ride until this time tomorrow? You will have time to get used to the idea, I'll have more to go on."

"Good enough," Earl said. "By the way, what do you hope to get out of this? A fee? It seems to me you have a rather tenuous service, but if you can uncover enough to show me the possibility of an attempt to kill me, I'll grant your thesis and be glad to pay you a substantial fee. This whole thing interests me. I'd like to look into it more. These morning sessions you speak of, for example."

"Possibly later," Dr. Freehurst said, rising.

The two men shook hands. Earl Baker went out into the reception room. At the sliding glass panel he paused and smiled at Linda Parnell.

"What did your crystal ball say?" he asked.

"Well . . ." she said reluctantly, then colored slightly and handed him a slip of paper she had already typed. "You can pick me up at six-thirty," she said.

In the hall Earl Baker closed

the door gently, glancing once more at the legend, *Dr. M. G. Freehurst & Associates*. He glanced at his wristwatch on the way to the elevator bank, saw that it was ten minutes to four.

In the downstairs lobby he started toward the phone booths, changed his mind, went out into the rain and took a taxi. Ten minutes later he stood before a similar door in another office building, bearing the legend, *E. E. Baker & Associates*.

Inside, he raised his eyebrows questioningly at the blond receptionist. The worried expression on her face diminished a little. She nodded and glanced significantly toward the door marked *Private*.

"We're not to be disturbed," he said, his hand on the knob about to enter his office.

He closed the door carefully from the inside, nodded at the man sitting beside the desk with an *Esquire* open on his lap.

"Hello, Mr. Mason," Earl said as he circled the desk and sat down. He glanced again at the alert expression on George Mason's face, and picked up the letter opener, stabbing with it at the desk blotter, an expression of bafflement growing on his face. "I don't know what to say now," he blurted.

"Why?" George Mason said. "Has something come up?"

Earl Baker looked across at the inventor. *What did a murderer look like?* Two days ago George Mason had looked like nothing more than an intelligent

and sensible man. A man with a good idea. Now . . .

Those bright blue eyes that blinked from behind thick-lensed glasses—could they change to the staring eyes of a homicidal maniac at some fancied wrong? Those somewhat thin lips that curled down at one corner and up at the other—could they compress into a straight line with homicidal fury?

The novelty gadget sat on a corner of the desk. It was an electric fan that had no motor and no blades, no moving parts at all, except the air that would rush through its wire screens when it was turned on.

Earl wasn't sure how it worked, but he felt sure it could not be a motive for murder. Not in itself.

Suddenly Earl wished with every atom of his being that he had never seen George Mason. The feeling surprised him. Mason had a natural money maker, a gadget that could be mass produced for less than a dollar and wholesaled for at least three. It was a terrific deal.

It was almost too good to be true. That was it. That, added to Dr. Freehurst.

"No," Earl said. "That is, yes, something has come up. Not in connection with you and your gadget. It has to do with my general activities, and until I get it out of the way I'm afraid I can't devote much time to getting this settled."

"How long do you think it will be?" George Mason asked.

"Not longer than two weeks," Earl said.

"Is that all?" Relief showed on George Mason's face. "Well, let's let it ride then. I'll come back in two weeks." He stood up and held out his hand.

"Fine," Earl said, standing up and shaking hands. "Fine."

It wasn't until Mason had gone out the door that it occurred to Earl that he should have made it longer than two weeks to eliminate Mason from the picture. And he didn't have Mason's address—unless Olga had it. He went to the door and asked her.

She didn't.

"It was," Earl said, "as though I were a puppet who had to do and say the very things I should not have."

Max Freehurst smiled sympathetically. "I know how you feel," he said. "And evidently what you did crystallized the murder pattern, because in this morning's session the newspapers of the twenty-ninth all headline your death. They're evenly divided on where your body will be found. One of them—just one of them—stated your body was found at a cabin in Wisconsin."

"I have a cabin there," Earl said.

"I surmised you must," Max said. "We call a lone occurrence at two weeks distance a long-shot symptom. The pattern developing is obviously one where you try every way you can to avoid contact with your murderer, and fail."

"Then there's no hope?" Earl said, a muscle in his cheek twitching.

"I didn't say that," Max Freehurst said. "On the contrary, when the shape of the future is being affected it is an indication that we are making progress. Yesterday's events definitely changed events of the twenty-eighth, so we can examine them in more detail to smoke out what did it. At least a third of our cases follow a pattern similar to yours so far. When we enter the problem the pattern of murder crystallizes into definiteness, we get at its root, and long before the would-be fatal day we have removed all possibility of murder."

"A third of your cases?" Earl Baker said in surprise. "I thought—"

"You thought you were the only one?" Max Freehurst smiled. "No. We've been operating this office for two years now. If you care to check the police records you will find in 1965, and before, there were over two hundred murders a year in Chicago, but in 1966 there were only five, and so far this year there have been only two. The five murders in 1966 all occurred in October, during a period when seventeen murders were approaching certainty. It was just too much for us to handle, all at once."

"Then the police are in on this?" Earl asked.

"No. Neither are the newspapers." Max Freehurst looked smug. "You see, the same tech-

nique applies to keeping our operation secret. If the police or the press were to learn about us, we would read about it in the papers far enough before it happened to prevent it."

"But why do you want it kept quiet?" Earl said.

"When our organization first started," Dr Freehurst said, leaning his elbows on his desk, "we decided that our first duty was to save lives. There were so many things we could do. Make fortunes on the stock market, win all the money at the race tracks. In fact, we did a little of that to finance our work, at first, and also to study what would happen. That was how we discovered the law of diminishing returns.

"You see, the moment we enter a picture with our knowledge of probable futures we become an integral part of that picture, and alter it. If a certain horse is going to win, for example, and we bet on that horse, our bet changes the odds to compensate. And the oftener we win the more widely we become known as consistent winners, until finally our betting changes the odds so drastically that we can win no more than ten percent. The stock market was even worse. It's extremely sensitive to emerging factors, and in almost no time at all just letting it be known we were in the market for certain stocks took them off the market.

"We settled down to our real work very quickly. Saving lives.

Preventing murders is only one phase of it. If everyone knew of our work, our organization, compensating factors would arise to completely nullify it."

"How?" Earl asked.

"There are so many ways it's pitiful," Max Freehurst said. "The police exist to preserve law and order, to prevent crime where possible, to catch the criminal. Criminals and potential criminals, knowing of the existence of the police, take into account their threat to success. It would be the same thing if our organization were known to the public. We would still be instrumental in preventing a few murders, but—" Dr. Freehurst spread his arms in a gesture of resignation. "Like Will Rogers, all we know is what we read in the newspapers. By the way, did you have a good time with our receptionist last night?"

Earl Baker grinned. "Read the newspapers and find out," he said.

Earl reached out and pressed the starting button on the *airmover*, as George Mason had named it. There was a faint a.c. hum at first, and then as the thing began to generate a strong draft, complete silence. He squinted into the breeze and tried to make out what was going on.

The airmover consisted of a flat plastic ring half an inch thick, four inches broad, and about ten inches in inside diameter, set firmly into a heavy base

that contained small transformers and other electrical parts. The plastic ring was covered on both sides by quarter-inch mesh copper screen, and as nearly as he could make out there were at least three other screens inside.

Nothing else. Five discs of metal screen evenly separated, and somehow, when the current went on, air just seemed to move through them in one direction.

Mason had been frankly reticent about explaining how it worked, and had boasted that it was put together in such a way that if anyone tried to take it apart the circuits would be scrambled beyond deciphering.

Some unknown principle must be involved that Mason felt confident no one could discover by any examination that could be made of the gadget.

Was it an important enough thing for murder? Was the principle used in the airmover good only for competing with electric fans or was it something with far-reaching consequences, like most electrical and mechanical principles.

Was it even electrical, basically?

Earl shut the thing off and turned it on several times, idly. He was alone in his office.

It had been a week since Dr. Freehurst had first contacted him and told him of his "impending murder." For the past four days nothing had produced any change in what the newspapers of the twenty-ninth would carry about his murder. He would be shot.

Coyly, the papers kept varying the location of his body, the time it would be found.

Two days ago Earl had watched the morning session. Fifty people, two-thirds of them women, had entered the long room beyond Dr. Freehurst's office and sat down in their places at a row of small desks on which were typewriters, notepaper—and the morning newspapers.

A bell had rung at seven o'clock, and the fifty people had picked up the newspapers and started reading them. At seven-thirty the bell had rung again and they had lain the newspapers aside.

"This reading routine is necessary for simplification," Dr. Freehurst had explained to Earl. "You see, it enables us to send their minds to definite times in the future under mass hypnosis. Times when they will be reading the day's papers."

When the fifty people put aside their newspapers Earl saw them each pick up a capsule from a napkin and wash it down with water from a paper cup. Then, leisurely, they had each put paper in their typewriter and sat back, closing their eyes.

"They will be put under by a recording over a loudspeaker," Dr. Freehurst had said. "It will have no effect on you or me because we aren't conditioned to it and haven't taken a capsule. The capsules contain a mixture of tranquilizers and other drugs conducive to hypnosis."

The voice over the loudspeaker, when it came, was pleasant and conversational. It spoke for two or three minutes on hypnosis and time, and without breaking its tempo it inserted, "When I reach ten you will be free of the present. One, two, three, . . ." And after it reached ten it said, "You will go to seven o'clock. You are reading a newspaper. The date on it is May twentieth, nineteen sixty-seven. You will type out first the death notices as you read them."

Fifty pairs of hands had started moving over fifty keyboards. And to Earl Baker it had seemed somehow unreal, too lacking in anything spectacular. No prickly force fields, no unearthly sounds. It could have been fifty adult students in a typing school . . .

"They are *conditioned*," Dr. Freehurst had said.

Earl had looked at the fifty faces. Ordinary faces.

"Carefully selected volunteers," Dr. Freehurst had said, sensing his thought. "They get no salary."

Earl Baker had recognized one of them. A clerk in a cigar store he sometimes frequented.

And now Earl sat in his office, playing with the airmover, trying to figure out how it worked.

How did air move? How did minds go into the future?

An excitement possessed him as he connected the two questions in his mind.

If—somehow—you could send the air in the space between two screens into the future, so that

it wasn't there now, there would be a vacuum, and air would rush in—but from all sides. It would take a fraction of a second for it to start rushing in, and then if you sent the air coming from one direction into the future and brought back to the present air that wasn't moving—

He pressed his fingers to his temples in an agony of concentration.

It took more than one stage. You had to pull the air rushing in the other direction back into another vacuum, so it all rushed in the same direction.

Suddenly he knew he had it. Time travel. A simple application of its principles, but—time travel.

He looked up. George Mason stood in the open doorway.

Dr. Freehurst skimmed over the fifty sheets of typewritten paper on his desk. Smiling suddenly, he flicked the intercom switch. "Linda," he said. "Get Mr. Baker on the phone and tell him everything will be all right. All mention of his murder has vanished from the papers of the twenty-ninth. Find out from him, if you can, what happened during

the past twenty-four hours that changed the picture."

He continued scanning the typewritten sheets while he waited. Suddenly he scowled. He flipped over several sheets, his scowl deepening.

He reached for the intercom switch while he continued to read. The intercom came to life before he touched it.

"Dr. Freehurst," Linda's voice sounded, worriedly.

"Yes?" he said.

"Mr. Baker's secretary informs me she has been unable to locate him. He is known to have been in his office last night after office hours, but there is no record of him leaving the building. She has called in the police. Mr.—" Her voice broke. "Earl has disappeared!" she wailed.

"Yes," Dr. Freehurst said sadly. "I know. And so, according to the newspapers, has a Mr. George Mason. His disappearance won't be noticed until day after tomorrow. And—My my! We must get better organized in our work! In Mr. Mason's hotel room will be discovered an—according to later newspapers—'obviously counterfeit ten dollar bill' with a 1974 date of issue printed on it!"

THE END



DADDY FIX?

By AL SEVCIK

ILLUSTRATOR SCHROEDER

FROWNING through his headache, Marlin Read pushed tentatively at the front gate. "Damn," he muttered, "it's sticking."

Here's a harmless-looking little short-short you'll read in ten minutes or less. But we promise you'll remember it for a long, long time.

Hesitating, as he did every afternoon, Marlin gazed briefly at the shimmering sterility of his neighbors' force-fields, comparing them with the small blue

gate and trim, white picket fence that encircled his own home. As usual, the fence won out. "It may be anachronistic and inefficient compared to a field, but, homemade or not, it's mighty pretty." He let the pride glow in him for a few seconds, then shoved open the gate, gritting his teeth at the sudden squeak that bounced across his brain.

"I'll grab some tools and fix that right after dinner," Marlin promised himself. He stepped through, gently closing the gate behind him.

"Daddy! Daddy's home!" His two sons exploded from the front door, followed immediately by a little, bouncy canine that yapped its way up the front walk after them. The four-year-old reached him first and held up a thin, square shaped box. "Daddy fix?"

Marlin smiled and lifted his eldest son. "So this is how you greet your old man?" The box, he saw, was Ronny's electronic space flight game which flashed, rang, and buzzed appropriate lights, bells and buzzers as one moved a space ship from Pluto to Mars. A handful of wires hanging dejectedly from one corner testified to the unit's inoperativeness.

Holding Ronny in his left arm, he knelt down as Davy, uncertainly trying his first steps, came stumbling up waving a small metal space man, one leg of which dangled awkwardly. Marlin guessed what was coming.

"Daddy fix!"

Laughing, his headache forgotten, Marlin straightened his youngest's drooping diapers and lifted him in his other arm. Then, scowling in mock anger, "Every day there's something broken around here. You know, I think you kids wreck your toys on purpose just to watch me fix them again."

Ronny's quick, "Oh, no, Daddy!" convinced Marlin that he had hit close to the truth. But he laughed again, hugged his sons, and said, "Okay, daddy fix. Let's get all the things together."

Sliding his feet to avoid stepping on the excited dog that bounced about his legs, Marlin carried the boys, the disconnected rocket game, and the fractured spaceman into the house.

"Honey, I'm home!" He set down his passengers and disengaged the dog's teeth from his sock. "Darn mutt, always in the way."

Alice was in the kitchen. "Hi, lover." She kissed him. "Can you take a look at the food processor? It doesn't seem to be working right."

Marlin sniffed. A slight odor of burning hung in the kitchen. "I see what you mean," he said, ambling over to the electronic oven and poking at some of the multi-colored knobs. "It's probably the timer R-C circuit. I'll bring up some new condensers from the shop and have a go at it after dinner. Okay?"

"You're wonderful," she said.

"Yeah," he admitted, and smiled.

"Come on, kids. Down to the work shop!" As he started across the kitchen the dog barked suddenly and jumped at his feet. Marlin stumbled, nearly falling. "Dammit!" He kicked at the dog which leaped backwards out of range and started yap-ping at him.

Trying to ignore the barks and the first slow throbs of a re-turning headache, Marlin picked up Davy and carried him down-stairs to the work shop. Ronny ran ahead with the broken toys.

The spaceman's leg was easily repaired with a molecular welder, and after Marlin gave it a slight polish the patch couldn't even be seen. Rewiring the rocket game took a little more time but wasn't difficult.

"How do you always know what to do, Daddy?"

"Well, son, I guess it's because I've been repairing gadgets and toys ever since I can remember."

Ronny watched the tools and the work with wide-eyed atten-tion. He hardly breathed until Marlin was finished, then he grabbed the rocket game and ran up to the kitchen. Marlin heard his high, excited voice, "Mommy, dad can fix *anything!*"

Smiling to himself, Marlin laid the tools aside, picked up Davy and carried him into the living room. Then he went up-stairs to wash.

Yap, yap, yap! The dog ran up the stairs after him, snapping

at his heels. "One of these days," Marlin growled, "I'm going to disconnect your blasted yapper." The dog darted be-tween his legs, nearly tripping him. "Damn mutt!"

The dog cried and whined at the bathroom door. When Marlin opened the door the dog barked. Cursing, he took a quick pill, his headache had bloomed and each bark was a jagged hurt.

As he walked to the head of the stairs the little canine bark-ed again and jumped at his leg. Marlin stumbled and grabbed wildy at the railing, catching it just as he started to fall. A muscle stabbed pain through his shoulder.

"That does it!" Enraged, he grabbed the mutt in one hand and hurled it down the stairs. It yelped once, thumped on the bot-tom steps, twitched, and lay still.

Ronny, across the room, stared in horror. Davy screamed and started to run, but fell, sobbing. Ronny stood paralyzed, tears rolled across his cheeks.

Immediately sorry, ashamed of his temper, Marlin ran down to them. "It's all right, kids. It's okay. Daddy will fix it." Picking up a screwdriver, he approached the still form of the dog.

Marlin unscrewed a plate in the dog's side and inspected the apparatus in its interior. The fall, he saw had dislodged the control gearing, which he pressed back into place with his finger. Tears flowing, Ronny watched him, open mouthed.

Replacing the plate, Marlin pressed a small stud on the dog's side and the animal bounded instantly into action, yapping, if anything, louder than before. Tears turned to smiles.

Marlin went out to the kitchen. Alice handed him a martini. As they talked he could hear the boys playing in the other room.

"Come to dinner, kids!"

They heard Ronny's voice. "Davy, come!"

Alice and Marlin traded smiles. "I think," she said, "big brother is a little bit bossy."

Ronny's voice rose in exasperation. "Come, Davy!"

"No."

"Come or I'll . . . That does it!"

Sounds of scuffling.

Frowning. Marlin stood. "I'd better see . . ."

"No, Ronny!"

A child's scream. A crash.

Panicked, Marlin lunged into the room. Davy lay at the foot of the stairs, still, in an ever-widening pool of blood.

White faced, Ronny looked up at his father. "Daddy fix?"

THE END



"Advertising! Advertising! This whole darned planet
is nothing but advertising!"

ACCENT ON SCIENCE

A Survey Of American Colleges And Universities

By DR. ARTHUR BARRON

AMERICAN colleges and universities are, for the most part, ready, willing, and able to train more aspiring young scientists. Our survey proves this beyond doubt. Our coverage was, of necessity, limited in scope. We felt fifty representative schools would give an accurate general picture. The *average* was our objective, therefore we did not winnow out fifty small, comparatively unknown schools to hold up as examples. Our samplings include the large and the small and were chosen with an eye toward even geographical distribution.

Therefore, you will find *some* schools in this listing that are jammed to the ceiling. But they are surprisingly rare. A majority of the schools we checked are crowded and *overcrowded* in the liberal arts courses. This fact is generally known. But there is much hope for the aspiring young engineer or scientist.

We have not gone, here, into the broader threats to education; increasing costs, low teachers' salaries, generally overtaxed facilities. These problems are common knowledge.

One more point of importance: on the indications of this survey, it is obvious that there are many colleges waiting for students; small, perhaps, and not necessarily on the glamor list, but permanently in business and of excellent scholastic rating. We suggest to those interested that they check the *College Bluebook* at their local public library for further information.

PRIVATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

AMHERST COLLEGE, Amherst, Mass. . . . In September, 1957 the enrollment was considered just about right, although the dorms were somewhat crowded. This is a liberal arts college and does not offer any engineering courses, however, there are many science courses in the curricula. They do have limited additional room for more in their science courses. Amherst has a special course available in "Analysis of Data and Design of Experiment." This may be taken by students of all science in order to give them an awareness of the available objective methods of conducting experiments and interpreting experimental results. This is one of the few colleges where astrophysics is offered to undergraduates.

ANTIOCH COLLEGE, Yellow Springs, Ohio . . . Antioch was somewhat under-enrolled as of Fall '57. In the coming year it will have room for about 100 additional undergraduate students and it will be able to accommodate greater numbers in science and engineering courses.

BATES COLLEGE, Lewiston, Me. . . . The current enrollment at Bates is just about right. It cannot handle additional students without enlarging both college and staff. The science courses here are filled to capacity and the enrollment in these courses has shown an increase in September, '57 as compared to September '56. It is interesting to note that Bates has a special laboratory course in instrumental methods of analysis designed to teach optical and electrical methods of analysis using instruments of commercial design.

BRADLEY COLLEGE, Peoria, Ill. . . . According to the Dean of Admissions and Records, Bradley is under-enrolled. In the coming academic year this college will be able to service 300 more undergraduate students and about 50 graduate students. This also indicates that there is room for more students in science and engineering.

BROWN UNIVERSITY, Providence, R. I. . . . It would not be possible to take on any more students here without adding facilities and staff. In the science courses perhaps five more qualified candidates could be accommodated, but that would be the limit. Brown states: there was a noticeable '57 increase in applicants over '56 but the enrollment is about the same with increased quality. The university is noted for a recently developed under-

Why This Survey In A Science Fiction Magazine . . . ?

Far same thirty years, the term "science fiction" has defined a type of fiction based upon known or projected scientific fact. That is what it has meant to its loyal fans through the years. But with the successful launchings of satellites—with the sudden world-wide interest in space and space travel—countless new readers have turned to the medium. And it has become apparent that many of them read a broader definition into the term. Therefore, while entertaining fiction is still our foundation stone and will continue to be, we feel that broader aspects are not outside our realm. Interest in Dr. Barran's articles on the social results of scientific advancements have proven our belief to be correct. Thus, we have been assured that this survey, a Special Service Feature is right where it belongs—in a science fiction magazine.—The Editor.

graduate and graduate program leading to a B.S. in applied mathematics with the emphasis on the ability to analyze physical situations by the use of mathematical tools.

COE COLLEGE, Cedar Rapids, Iowa . . . Coe College is considered to be somewhat under-enrolled. In '58 it will have room for about 50 more undergraduate students over the current enrollment. There is no graduate school. Also they do not have an engineering school. The science courses are excellent.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, New York, N. Y. . . . The current enrollment at Columbia is considered just about right, however it could handle about 100 additional qualified students at the undergraduate level and about 350 more at the graduate level in '58. At present there is no more room for enrollment in science courses for undergraduates, but there is room for more engineering students in the undergraduate school. Columbia gives an M.A. and a Ph.D. in applied mathematics. There are a minimum of 20 full fellowships in pure science offered. It has advanced seminars in nuclear physics. A course is given in Statistical Mechanics with Dr. Tsug-Dao Lee (Nobel Prize winner, 1957).

CENTRE COLLEGE OF KENTUCKY, Danville, Ky. . . . There is room for about 40 more students in the undergraduate school and about 20 more in the graduate school at Centre College. Science courses for upperclassmen are less crowded than for freshmen.

DARTMOUTH COLLEGE, Hanover, N. H. . . . One of the most interesting things here is the special emphasis in the Thayer School of Engineering on "Systems Engineering," that is engineering which requires close teamwork among scientists and engineers of different disciplines. In the area of opportunities of enrollment, Dartmouth has just about the right number of students in both its undergraduate and graduate schools. In '58 they will not be able to accept any more qualified students than they could take in in '57 unless they add staff and facilities. The science courses, however, have room for a few more interested students who would care to elect some courses in this field along with their other studies.

DUKE UNIVERSITY, Durham, N. C. . . . R. L. Tuthill, Registrar at Duke University, states enrollment conditions in September, '57 were crowded in general. If the present circumstances prevail in the fall of '58 it could not accommodate any additions to the

undergraduate school, but the graduate school could handle a few more. Science courses at the upper level also have some extra room; the same is true of the graduate courses in engineering. Science courses at the lower level and engineering courses in the undergraduate school are handling as many students as they can possibly take care of. Duke is unique for its "Three-Two" plan for engineering students. They receive a B.S. in engineering from Duke and a B.A. in liberal arts from cooperating liberal arts colleges for only five years of study.

KALAMAZOO, Kalamazoo, Mich. . . . Without enlargement the college could not accept a larger freshman class in September, '58 than they have been taking up to date. An increase in science course enrollments this year as compared to last year is noted.

MACALESTER COLLEGE, St. Paul, Minn. . . . 1,500 is the normal enrollment for Macalester College, according to George E. Scotton, Admissions Counsellor. In September, '57 the student body numbered 1,300 which makes it somewhat under-enrolled. Both the undergraduate school and the graduate school can accept more qualified students for the next academic year. This also holds for the science and engineering courses offered.

MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY, Milwaukee, Wis. . . . The total enrollment at Marquette in September, '57 was just about right. The science and engineering courses could handle a few more from within the student body who would like to elect study in these areas.

MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, (M.I.T.), Cambridge, Mass. . . . M.I.T. is one of the minority of institutions in this survey that reports completely overcrowded conditions. Without additional facilities or staff it could not begin to handle any more qualified students in September, '58. M.I.T. has more than 70 special laboratories available on campus for student work including nuclear reactor, supersonic wind tunnels and servo mechanisms laboratory. Students are encouraged to participate in basic governmental and industrial studies.

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY, Washington Square, N. Y. . . . This vast university in the heart of New York City is somewhat under-enrolled. In September, '58 the undergraduate school will be able to handle 75 to 100 more qualified students on the freshman level and more than that on the sophomore, junior and senior levels. In the graduate school the number of additional students

acceptable varies with the fields of study involved. Science and engineering courses are open for larger numbers of students. N.Y.U. has a loan fund for engineering students available without security for five years before the first installment is due. It also has oceanography fellowships which cover full tuition and fees for nine months.

UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME, Notre Dame, Ind. . . . In general Notre Dame is crowded, however it is able to accept about 100 more qualified students in the graduate school. The science and engineering courses are filled to capacity. Notre Dame has 15 graduate fellowships available in pure science from industrial companies eg. Douglas Aircraft award for a senior student in the Department of Aeronautical Engineering; a 4-year Union Carbide Scholarship.

OBERLIN COLLEGE, Oberlin, Ohio . . . Robert Jackson, Director of Admissions at Oberlin writes that the college enrollment is just about right for the staff and facilities now available. Under these circumstances the science courses too, have a comfortable number of students.

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY, Princeton, N. J. . . . The enrollment in both the undergraduate and graduate schools of Princeton is running at capacity as of September, '57. Within the university the science and engineering courses are now handling as many students as they can with the available facilities. An interesting note is Project Matterhorn at the James Forrestal Research Center. This provides training and research facilities for nuclear engineering with emphasis on producing and maintaining controlled hydrogen fusion reaction.

RANDOLPH-MACON, Ashland, Va. . . . Though the current enrollment at Randolph-Macon is considered just about right, it does have enough room to accept about 50 more qualified students in September, '58. Within the college curriculum there is also room for more enrollment in the science courses. This college does not have a graduate program and it does not offer any engineering courses.

TRINITY COLLEGE, Hartford, Conn. . . . Trinity is another of the minority in this survey reported to be crowded. With the present set-up it could not accommodate any more undergraduate students, but there is room for a small number of additional qualified graduate students. The advanced courses in science and

engineering could also handle a few more students. Trinity has an unusual course in mathematical typology in the curriculum.

TUFTS UNIVERSITY, Medford, Mass. . . . The undergraduate enrollment at Tufts is just about right, however the graduate school could accept additional qualified students—number unstated. Science and engineering courses would need additional staff and facilities before they could take on any more enrollments. Tufts has especially good biological laboratory facilities for work in cytology, histology, anatomy, physiology and bacteriology.

WESTMINSTER, Fulton, Mo. . . . In September, '57 the enrollment here was about right, but there was still room for about 50 more qualified freshman students in September, '58. Those interested in taking science and engineering courses will find that there is room at Westminster.

WILLIAM JEWEL, Liberty, Mo. . . . William Jewel College is definitely under-enrolled. The undergraduate level has room for 200 more students during the '58 academic year.

WILMINGTON COLLEGE, Wilmington, Ohio . . . This college considers its '57 enrollment to be just about right. Without additional facilities or staff it could not handle any more students.

YALE UNIVERSITY, New Haven, Conn. . . . In undergraduate and graduate work and in science as well as engineering courses, Yale University is crowded. If the University were to expand in size and staff it might then be able to accept more qualified students in future years. Within the University curriculum there is room for more science and engineering students. Yale is unique in that it offers a special B.S. in bio-physics and bio-chemistry; also a special B.A. for liberal arts students in physics-philosophy, mathematics-philosophy.

STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA, University, Ala. . . . In September, '57 the enrollment here was considered to be just about right. The undergraduate school is able to accept more qualified students in September, '58 while the graduate school is not. Students who are interested in taking science and engineering courses as part of their program at Alabama will find room.

UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA, Tucson, Ariz. . . . The University of Arizona is unable to accept more qualified students in either the undergraduate or graduate schools under its current set-up. This same situation is true of its science and engineering courses.

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS, Fayetteville, Ark. . . . Although the University of Arkansas reports its September, '57 enrollment to be just about right, it also states that it could accept about 300 more qualified students in September, '58 and about 150 more graduate students. Courses in science and engineering are comparatively wide open.

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO, Boulder, Colo. . . . Conditions here are crowded. Under the current set-up it would not be possible to accept any more qualified undergraduate students in the next academic year; however, the graduate schools may be able to take a few more in certain departments. The science and engineering courses at Colorado are filled to capacity.

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA, Athens, Ga. . . . As of September, '57 the enrollment at the University of Georgia was crowded. In September, '58 they expect to be able to accept about 300 more men in the undergraduate school and about 200 students in general in the graduate school. At the moment the science courses have about as many students as they can handle. The only engineering course offered at this university is agricultural engineering. There is room for more students to take this course.

UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO, Moscow, Idaho . . . In September, '58, according to the registrar at the University of Idaho there will be room for about 200 more undergraduate students and approximately 50 more graduate students. At present the science and engineering courses are not overcrowded.

UNIVERSITY OF IOWA, Iowa City, Iowa . . . The current enrollment at Iowa is listed as just about right, however in September, '58 there will be room for some undergraduates in the sciences but not in English courses. On the graduate level the university will be able to handle about 200 to 250 students in general science areas but again they cannot take any more candidates in English. The engineering courses are running at capacity too. This popularity may be due to the fact that the world-wide famous Iowa Institute of Hydraulic Research provides special opportunities for training in the College of Engineering. The University of Iowa

is unique in that it offers special correspondence courses for full credit in mathematics and astronomy available to non-residents.

UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA, Baton Rouge, La. . . . At this school, some areas of enrollment are reported to be crowded, such as engineering, while others are under-enrolled, for example agriculture. More qualified students will be accepted in '58, the number will vary with the area. In order to take on more enrollment in some of the science and engineering courses more staff and facilities would be needed.

UNIVERSITY OF MAINE, Orono, Me. . . . The enrollment situation in '57 was considered just about right and there seems to be enough leeway so that about 100 more qualified undergraduate and 25 more graduate students could be accepted in '58. The science and engineering courses are now handling as many students as they can manage with their facilities. This university is noted for its especially fine courses in agricultural engineering offered with the B.S. in several specializations.

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS, Amherst, Mass. . . . The University of Massachusetts has just about as many students as it can accommodate. Neither the undergraduate school nor the graduate school could take on any more students in '58 unless they were to add facilities and staff. This condition holds true for the science and engineering courses offered at the University.

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN, Ann Arbor, Mich. . . . The University of Michigan is crowded right up to capacity at both levels and in both the science and engineering areas.

UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI, University, Miss. . . . 1957 enrollment is checked as just about right. Without crowding it appears that in September, '58 about 200 more undergraduate students and about 50 additional graduate students will be accepted. Those wishing to study science and engineering at the University of Mississippi will not have difficulty enrolling in these courses. The University of Mississippi offers a B.S. in pharmacy to its students. Also there is a special course in micro-technique for undergraduates.

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI, Columbia, Mo. . . . In September, '58 the University of Missouri will have room for about 500 more undergraduates and the same number of graduates over and above its present enrollment. There is room for more enrollment

in science courses. This is also true of engineering courses at the upperclass and graduate levels. The University of Missouri has an unusual ceramic engineering laboratory and plant.

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA, Missoula, Mont. . . . Additional students could be accommodated if they were to enter the courses that are not crowded. In order to take on more science students additional staff and facilities would be necessary. At present the University is short some laboratory and research space.

UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE, Durham, N. H. . . . The student body at the University of New Hampshire is slightly below what the university is able to handle. There is room for additional candidates in both the undergraduate school and the graduate school. Though the University has no engineering school, there is room in the general science courses.

UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO, Albuquerque, N. M. . . . Here the report is that the University of New Mexico is somewhat under-enrolled but growing very rapidly. The outlook for accepting more students in September, '58 over September, '57 is 10 percent at the undergraduate level and 10 percent at the graduate level. Currently the science and engineering courses are uncrowded.

OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY, Columbus, Ohio . . . Based on September, '57 enrollments, the Ohio State University could be described as somewhat under-enrolled. More qualified students could be accepted in September, '58. In the undergraduate colleges the number of students would depend on additional staffing in some areas. In the graduate school it would take additional staff if enrollments were to increase. In the science courses, with present staff, additional enrollments could be accepted depending on the number that would enroll. The same holds true in the engineering courses. It is interesting to note that 50 industrial companies offer fellowships and scholarships for science training and research. Ph.D. candidates in bio-physics, bio-chemistry and plant physiology may use the Kettering Institute facilities at Antioch for research in the study of chlorophyll and photosynthesis.

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON, Eugene, Ore. . . . The enrollment at the University of Oregon is described as about right. It could not accept any more qualified students in either the undergraduate school or the graduate school as long as present facilities prevail. The science courses have close to capacity enrollment. There is no engineering offered at this university.

UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND, Kingston, R. I. . . . General enrollment conditions in September, '57 are noted as crowded. In September, '58 more students could be accepted in agriculture, home economics, nursing, chemistry, while no more could be accommodated in engineering or liberal arts. The graduate school could handle a small increase in the coming year.

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY, Syracuse, N. Y. . . . This is a large university in upper New York State offering programs in both the sciences and the liberal arts. It is considered to be somewhat under-enrolled at present. The breakdown for accepting more students in the undergraduate school in September, '58 is as follows: 100 more in engineering, 20 more in physics and 20 more in chemistry. At the graduate level it will be able to accommodate 50 more engineering students and 20 more chemistry students. The undergraduate general science courses as well as the engineering courses are able to accept additional candidates too.

UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, Knoxville, Tenn. . . . In general the University of Tennessee is crowded. As with many of the other institutions in the survey certain departments and areas are more crowded than others. In September, '58 it would be possible for this university to add about 400 undergraduate students and 100 graduate students to its total population providing these additions were properly distributed among the many departments. The various science courses are still able to handle more students. The engineering courses, however, can take but a very small number with their present staff and facilities. The University of Tennessee offers an unusual undergraduate course in physical cybernetics, stressing theories of information especially as related to computing. The graduate school offers advanced topics in quantum theory designed to meet the individual requirements of students.

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS, Austin, Tex. . . . The whole picture is extremely bright at the University of Texas. New facilities are under construction, funds and the available staff do not indicate any restriction in enrollment in the near future.

UNIVERSITY OF UTAH, Salt Lake City, Utah . . . Enrollment conditions are considered to be just about right. In September, '58 Utah will be able to accept about 500 more qualified students in the undergraduate school and about 100 in the graduate school, but it looks like these students will find more room in courses other than science and engineering, these seem to be crowded.

UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT, Burlington, Vt. . . . The University of Vermont is filled to capacity at the undergraduate level and the applications at the graduate level are up to the extent that September, '58 will find them admitting only about 20 or so over the number in September, '57. There is still room for more enrollments in science courses, however it is noted that there is a considerable increase in students to be admitted next fall in science and math. At the University of Vermont the College of Technology offers a number of specialized professional curricula in chemistry, engineering, mathematics and medical technology.

UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA, Charlottesville, Va. . . . September, '58 will find that the University of Virginia can accept about 100 more undergraduate students and about 50 graduate students over what they now consider a college population that's just about right. Students will not have much trouble enrolling in some of the science courses, in others it will be more difficult until a building that is now under construction is finished.

SUMMARY

A minority of the institutions checked (26%) reported generally crowded conditions. A majority (56%) indicated "comfortable" capacity. A fringe of our schools (one university—the balance, colleges—an overall total of 12%)—report definitely undercrowded general conditions.



Many private colleges and universities (68%) find it difficult to enroll more undergraduates at present, especially the "Ivy League" schools. But most state universities (72%) are wide open for more undergraduate registrations. Both private and state institutions have room for more graduate students. A total of 66% report vacancies.



Both private (64%) and state institutions (52%) report considerable room for more current science enrollment without addition of staff or facilities.



Both private (72%) and state institutions (40%) report more room for engineering enrollments.



Despite the furor over the nation's "lack" of scientists and technicians, many of the colleges and universities (56%) report no noticeable increase in science and engineering enrollments in 1957.

CLASS OF 2008

A Prediction Of Things To Come In The Educational Pattern

By AUREN URIS

Auren Uris, one of the country's foremost analysts, specializes in Business Management and Human Relations. His latest book, "The Efficient Executive" is fast becoming a standard guide to business efficiency at the executive level. His books (5 in all) have been translated into four languages. He is an analyst at the world-famous Research Institute of America, where his most recent research has been focused on the new problems a rapidly developing technology will create for us in the future. With a family of four potential college grads (ages 4, 6, 8, and 12) Mr. Uris is more than casually interested in education of the future. So this article was prepared with far more than casual research.

YOU'LL find college textbooks 50 years from now in a library under the card "Obsolete Items."

An end to book study? Not at all. Joe College, class of '08, will sport loose-leaf texts, updated every six months by supplementary material.

The cards for this development were dealt way back in the fifth decade of the 20th century. A swelling stream of discoveries in the science of physics, for example, meant continual revision of physics books. Accordingly, college students found a standard source of re-capitalization, the re-sale of their textbooks, completely cut off.

The loose-leaf answer first had been developed for the businessman. Tax, payroll, and labor

services in the form of loose-leaf handbooks, were merchandised with the understanding that changes in regulations would be covered by new pages.

A numbering system made it a simple matter for a secretary to locate and remove outdated pages, and insert the new ones just arrived in the morning mail.

School authorities latched on to this system first in subjects like chemistry and physics, where change had worked up the biggest head of steam. But eventually, as the value of the loose-leaf text became clear, the wastefulness of the old bound textbook became similarly apparent, and soon the heads of all departments joined the parade.

New York University —Pioneer

Few people realized that an educational stunt pulled off in 1957 was to provide a pattern for higher education of the future.

When Floyd Zulli, professor of Romance Languages at New York University first started his comparative literature course, sleepy students, lured from their beds at 6:30 in the morning, scarcely realized they were riding the wave of the future.

Of course, the problem of education by television was entirely one of motivation. To the young adult to whom a class-cut was the height of self-indulgence—sitting in front of a television screen in his own home was tantamount to self-flagellation. But that was before the big change. It came in two stages:

First, economics, not educational science, revolutionized life for Joe College. Anyone with an eye for statistics could have spotted the trend. In simplest terms, for the United States to have built the school facilities adequate for educational needs by the year 2000 would have taken every cent in the treasury.

Even a modest investment in plant facilities required for the educational goals set by 2000 A.D. represented so large a sum that officials had to choose between education as opposed to

all other governmental services. As we know now, the national version of the Jones incentive known as "keeping up with the Russians" took 95 percent of the budget for basic research and space exploration. Once this fact became clear, another alternative had to be found.

The second stage was a demand, under pressure, to make the most of our greatest national resource—our brains—American culture began to mature, and everything from comics to jazz took a back seat.

Even in his high school days Joe became a serious student. His enrollment in pre-college activities was climaxed by a recital of the Student Oath before a Board of Regents:

The Student Oath

"I do solemnly swear to develop myself mentally to the best of my ability, to give unstintingly of my time and energy so that my future and that of my beloved country may equally prosper."

In the same room in which Joe gave his pledge was a large wall plaque and mural dramatizing the exhortation of the school authorities:

"Students must be willing to learn even the hard subjects, to accept discipline and to embrace study, not only to advance themselves,

but as a patriotic duty to insure the perpetuation of the government and the way of life which are their heritage."

The Bedroom School

In short, Joe College's bedroom became his place of study. There was some loss resulting from the change. The stimulation of group dynamics was lacking. The benefit of the other students' thought and actions were no longer his.

But there were advantages, too. There was a greater tendency towards individuality and originality of thought. Thrown on his own resources, Joe College could no longer sit back and let the eggheads pull the class along. He had to stay in the intellectual swim by his own efforts. He was not the less desirous of conformity perhaps; but it no longer was practical social behavior.

A college service set up on a regular schedule like the bakery-products driver or the milkman kept the walls of his room covered with a succession of visual aid materials—graphs, charts, mnemonics devices for pinning ideas into the brain's memory banks.

Some of the simpler diagrams were represented by bent-tube neon signs on an automatic on-off switch. During World War II the increased memorability of a split-second image for training troops to remember

plane silhouettes was observed. Joe found his two-dimensional illustrations easily memorizable as they blazed like lightning from his wall.

The benzadrine imbibers of the 20th century would have traded their best girl's telephone number for the pharmacopoeia available to his grandchildren:

. . . *Sleep shorteners.* Instead of frazzling the nerves by drugs that kept them awake, Joe and his fellow students partook of pills that made four hours sleep do the work of eight—and no side effects. Thus he was always rested and relaxed.

. . . *Concentration helpers.* "Attento" was the drug of the year. One whiff (it was packaged in an aerosol bomb form) and Joe's mind turned razor sharp. Outside distractions completely faded. The result was a kind of mental tunnel vision that increased study efficiency by fifty percent.

. . . *Relaxants.* The examination crisis was a thing of the past. "Eezeedoo," a liquid usually mixed with soda or fruit juice, made a mid-term painless, and end-term exams seemed a reason for light gaiety.

In addition, the think-sleep technique was used frequently. Scientists had known for a long time that the receptivity of the brain is increased under certain mental conditions. Accordingly, tape-recorded material was played through earphones into Joe College's ears during his sleeping periods.

Tuition—No Longer Through the Nose

The year 1968 saw the beginning of the trend toward a new method of financing higher education. It came just in time, spurred by rapidly dropping college enrollment.

By 1958, the \$2,000 to \$3,000 annual cost per student of college attendance put severe strains on all but the wealthy. Even for the moderately well off, two or even three children coming of college age within the same four-year period represented financial catastrophe.

The answer was that the industry for which the college student was being prepared paid for his tuition. Generally, two years of employment with his company cancelled off the debt.

During this two years he was an indentured servant. Soviet Russia had used this system as far back as the 1940's. But the system was hundreds of years old. Immigrants to colonial America had paid for their passage to the new world by becoming indentured servants.

Employment By Test

The system of industrial paternalism was made possible by the refinement of interest and aptitude tests. By 1990, psychologists had perfected their testing instruments. When a child was still in grammar school, it was possible to arrive at a firm conclusion as to

the kind of job he could do best. Once his test results were analyzed and evaluated, FAB (Federal Assignment Board) recommended placement in a specific job.

It was then up to the industry to keep a watchful eye on its future inductees, not only footing the bills but also doing whatever possible to make its future employees "food minded," "construction minded," "banking minded," "agricultural minded," and so on.

Needless to say, parents generally objected to these extracurricular indoctrination efforts:

"The kids are putting in full time. We don't think it's fair for the companies to take up their non-business time with business matters." Nevertheless, many a midnight saw many a Personnel Director counseling a teen-age youngster whose behavior threatened to mar the smooth future functioning of the Allied Bean Works.

By the time Joe actually qualified as a college freshman, he knew a great deal about his future employment and the industry in which he'd be working.

The Super Specialist

Shortly after the end of World War II, specialization began to appear in the industrial scene. A typical classified section of the *New York Times*

showed how the winds of specialization were blowing. The fact that an individual was an engineer, for example, made little dent. The ads called for: "Digital and Logical Circuit Designers"; "Nuclear power-plant specialist"; "Missile propulsion analysis"; "Pulse system design."

The same type of specialization began to appear in other employment categories.

Take the classification, "executive," for example. At one time an executive was a general administrator. So standardized were administrative procedures, that executives could be transferred from one industry to another with little time required for learning the new job.

But that was the old-fashioned executive. By the year 2008, if a college student were to be an executive, he knew in addition whether he was to be a Decision-Making Executive, Planning Executive, Organizing Executive, Motivating Executive or Control Executive. Training for each specialty took the last year of his college life. He concentrated on it.

Let's say our favorite student, Joe College, was destined (and the word isn't used loosely) to be a Decision-Making Executive.

Decision-Making, of course, is one of the toughest of executive functions. Before it became a specialty, the general practitioner type of executive developed everything from ulcers to

alcoholism in trying to carry out this one part of his job.

But thanks to advanced education, Joe's training equipped him to make decisions with ease. Three special courses helped him over the hurdles:

. . . Course #356—*Emotional Conditioning for Decision Making*.

Psycho-hypnotic techniques by which decision pressures can be neutralized by instantaneous self-analysis.

. . . Course #H-753—*Mechanical Decision Making*.

Decisional Techniques using computers, Operations Research and Games Theory.

. . . Course #968—*Biology of Decision Making*.

Laboratory techniques for checking your blood pressure, instantaneous mental clarity and blood sugar content.

With these three courses mastered, Joe could proceed with calmness to make the decisions that drove his professional forebears to a premature grave.

The Fate of Rah Rah Rah

Joe's college life was toughest on his grandfather. Gramps had viewed with silent heartbreak the passing of the old college: "Classrooms for 5,000, football stadium for 100,000."

What of the noble traditions that had made Joe College's grandfather's college years so memorable? What of the cam-

pus life, the fraternities, the class rallies and, of course, the college football teams?

Some aspects survived into the 21st century. As a matter of fact there were even organizations that were called fraternities. These were week end clubs, generally with athletic facilities and, of course, the usual dance floor and courting dormitories.

By 2008, statistics showed that 75 percent of all college students were married. The great hazard to early marriage had been removed when the future of the college student had been assured. Once Joe knew that there would be no protracted job hunts after graduation, no years of struggle at \$15 a week (for "experience") there was no longer any social or economic reason for the boys and girls not to get together in holy wedlock.

College Love

But for the typical married college couple, the big deal was to get husband and wife enrolled in the same courses.

Aside from the fact that it legalized kissing between sessions, it automatically cut education expenses way down. Although this didn't show up in

terms of cash-on-hand, it did shorten the period of indenture for the couple.

Being able to get by with only one visual-aids service, one fee for the closed TV circuit, one set of loose-leaf texts generally shortened the period of indebtedness from 2 years to 1½. Two could study for the price of one—almost.

Since they could not afford to set up even light housekeeping in most instances, it was at the week end fraternity clubs that their marriage status was given full play.

Day of the Sheepskin

Graduation for Joe was generally a happy occasion.

In the little red-school house college era, although few would admit it, tears were often shed. Particularly wet-cheeked were the college heroes who knew that no matter what future riches life held out, they'd never have it so good again.

Joe's graduation was held in a hotel banquet room. The ceremony signified the end of the "homelessness" of the graduate. He was received into the paternal bosom of the company for which he was to work with the feeling that at last he had come into his own.

THE END



by S. E. COTTS

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE SKY. By Arthur C. Clarke, 245 pp. Harcourt, Brace and Company. \$3.95.

A new collection of stories by Clarke is out and S-F fans can experience again the thrill of anticipation that accompanies settling back in an easy chair with a book by an expert. This volume includes an incredibly wide range of material: the humor of "Cosmic Casanova"; the eeriness of "The Morning After"; the sense of timelessness in "The Wall of Darkness"; the poetic awe in "Out of the Sun." These are only a sampling of the shades on Clarke's palette.

The high quality of the author's writing is no secret to science fiction readers by now, but his current effort ought to win him some new followers as well. His combination of scientific authority and luminous prose has seldom been seen to better advantage.

THE END OF ETERNITY. By Isaac Asimov. 192 pp. Signet Books. Paper: 35¢.

Readers who are tired of a bland diet and hunger after a really meaty story are strongly advised to read Asimov's latest novel, *The End of Eternity*. They will be amply rewarded for their time.

In the 27th Century Eternity was discovered, and with it a whole new class of men developed, the Eternals. Taken from their own Time, relentlessly trained, forever banished from the normal life of man, they roamed through Time changing the Past to alter the Future. They had the whole of History at their command, and they considered it their duty to change Reality so that man's most glaring errors were nullified.

Andrew Harlan was an Eternal, a fine and promising one in the opinion of his superiors. Then he fell in love with a non-Eternal girl and used the techniques he knew to twist Time for his own

purposes. But he stumbled into more than he bargained for, and the repercussions of his tampering rocked his civilization.

Here is one of Asimov's most daring and original concepts, beautifully realized. It is guaranteed to spark even the most hardened imaginations.

WORLD WITHOUT MEN. By Charles Eric Maine. 190 pp. Ace Books. Paper: 35¢.

The world of five thousand years from now is a world of only one sex—woman. All the scientific energy of the age is focused on one project: to recreate the male sex. Yet the success of this project was to set up a crisis that the stable woman's society hadn't anticipated.

Though the subjects discussed in this frank novel resemble those in Huxley's *Brave New World*, it is by no means just a pale imitation. It can stand on its own as a finely crafted story whose suspense is chilling despite the flashback technique it employs. In fact, the scene is so vividly set in the beginning that one is anxious to hear how conditions got this way instead of resenting the reversion to an earlier time.

In addition to its readability, the novel has a measure of social significance, too. The gravity of the book's warning should stimulate some serious thinking along the directions indicated. This is particularly true in view of the fact that birth control is beginning to surmount the taboos that covered it for so long.

A publisher's note tells that this is the book that the author enjoyed writing the most. Our advice to you then, Mr. Maine, is to keep right on having fun.

SPACE IS FOR SUCKERS

(Continued from page 51)

"This was the only way. Don't you see? You *only* love them when they're your own. And they need love. Oh, so much love, our new children on a new world."

Jed reached over Norma and gently touched the chin of the little red "devil," and for some reason this caused its mouth to

open in a toothless gurgling sound of pleasure, its tawny eyes to shine.

Then, for some reason, Norma and Jed turned to look deep into each other's eyes. What they found there—well, even Terra Two has its secrets that no one else can share. . . .

THE END

... OR SO YOU SAY

The "Best Letter of the Month" contest is a huge success. The letters are pouring in like answers to an offer of free room and board. The winners will appear next month and each month thereafter. April is the first "contest month"—April letters being considered for that month only, with winners appearing in the July issue. Get your letter in!

Dear Ed:

A word on the new *Amazing* novel. It's the best thing since the 1940 to 1945 *Amazing*. We have needed a long novel for quite some time. I just don't care for short stories. Only one thing was lacking—if you can't get better illustrators keep the Dali scribblers out of the magazine.

Since *Dream World* was discontinued how about giving us an *Amazing* reprint magazine. I am sure it would sell.

Ned C. Reece
Route 3, Box 68-A
Kannapolis, N. C.

• *The Amazing Science Fiction Novels will get better and better as time goes on. Most of them will appear later in hard covers.*

Dear Editor:

The letter by Norwin Johnson in your April issue aroused my interest very much. I am for his suggestion one hundred percent. In the 1920's I was not yet born, and I trust a host of other *Amazing* readers are in the same boat. For this reason I would like to see many of those old classics of science fiction rerun, so that we may read them and enjoy the same wonderful literature our fathers did. Around the 1940's I was an avid fan of *Amazing*. During those years I acquired quite a collection of magazines with some very famous stories in them. The ones I enjoyed most were the John Carter of Mars stories. These too, I would like to see in print again.

Going deeper into the subject, I find that I really do not want to have these old stories rerun for that could prove to be quite boring. But what we really want is a new swashbuckling hero to rise from the imagination of some writer to thrill us as did the John Carter of a by-gone era. Whether he fights with a sword (which I prefer) or a ray gun, it makes no difference.

You may argue, "Why do you want a character in a series character." True, but there are many readers such as myself who would like to meet in the pages of *Amazing* some spectacular adventurer whom we can get to know so we can almost perceive his next move, yet his next move is a bigger surprise than the one before. To this you might say "Well, we have such a person the unpredictable Johnny Mayhem." And I say good. I have always enjoyed him, but so far his stories have been only short novelettes. How about a nice long novel such as the two you have run to date. Incidentally, the one I like best is "One Of Our Cities Is Missing."

Going through some of the issues of the past two years I found several men who in my opinion would prove to be excellent serial material. For instance there was Lon Archman of "Cosmic Kill," and Bram Forest of "Quest of the Golden Ape." Bram Forest is the finest example of a gladiator type man I have run across since John Carter. In *Fantastic* you had Kyvor. That Tarzan flavor brought back pleasant memories.

These are my opinions. How many of you readers share them? Will we again someday have a glorious hero to look up to?

Walter Orlandini
5959 W. Grace St.
Chicago 34, Ill.

• Just a teaser, Walter. One of the upcoming novels in *Amazing* will concern Thundar—a great, new romantic character who will be long remembered. I'm sure that there will be immediate demands for sequels to "Man Of Two Worlds."

Dear Editor:

I think the new revised *Amazing* is great. The only thing I don't like is the dropping of the "Space Club." It offered the readers of *Amazing* a chance to get acquainted. I have many pen pals who I got through the "Space Club." I know other readers feel as I do. Please bring it back.

Vince Iacoboni
19 Cottage St.
Leominster, Mass.

• Take a look at page 145. Have a hunch the ad columns are going to get mighty interesting, and that we'll be hearing from many of our old-time Space Clubbers.

Dear Editor:

Another hit! The April issue was excellent. The novel "One Of Our Cities Is Missing" was the best I ever read concerning today's

world conditions—could happen any time. Irving Cox didn't miss one detail.

The short stories were very good. Plenty of space adventure.

The article "Research Into Death" was very intriguing—made one think.

Anyway as far as I'm concerned the new *Amazing* is the tops. As I have stated many times before—The Flagship.

W. C. Brandt

Apt. N

1725 Seminary Avenue

Oakland, Calif.

Dear Editor:

The new expanded *Amazing* is great! I especially liked "The Truth and the Image." It was tops. And this O. H. Leslie is about the best. "The Creators" simply couldn't have been any better. The novel was good too. Let's have some more in the future.

I am looking forward to the "Research Into Death" article and I would like to see some more articles on this subject.

By the way, this Valigursky has got to go.

Stephanie Norris

New Freedom, Pa.

• *There will be more articles by Dr. Barron on some of the most surprising subjects imaginable. For instance—hypnotism over television—and one on the fantastic "spare parts" banks for the human body.*

Dear Editor:

Mind if I come to your defense? I read something in the Reader Speaks which really annoyed me. A Mr. Robert Saum said that the only thing he enjoyed since pre-war days was Harold Sherman's "Green Man." Mr. Saum, if you bother to dig through *Amazing's* back issues you'll find some of the most enjoyable reading in your life. For example: Phillips "So Shall Ye Reap," Hamilton "Star Kings" etc. True, even the Shaver Mystery sickened me at times, but "Gods of Venus" still remains in my mind a classic.

A story by Palmer? Good, even though he writes some pretty poor stuff under his own name. *Amazing* is improving rapidly.

Don Kent

3800 Wellington

Chicago, Ill.

• *If you want to read what is probably Shaver's greatest story, get the July issue of Fantastic—the special Shaver Mystery issue and read, "The Dream Makers."*

Dear Editor:

I humorously worshipped "The Space Breed."

It was the best *Amazing Stories* that we have had in quite a while and it gives me such great pride and joy to get them too. I am reminded of the good old days when you had stories like "The Lost Warship."

James W. Ayers
609 First Street
Attalla, Ala.

Dear Ed:

I've just finished the April issue of your magazine. I thought I'd write you and let you know I enjoyed it very much, especially the novel "One Of Our Cities Is Missing." I also enjoyed "The Stars Fought Back."

I think you were right in your editorial when you said the only possible conclusion that could be drawn from your novel is that "It must not come to pass."

A/2C Kenneth Knecht
Box 1269 CMR 2
Keesler AFB, Miss.

• *More good stories—always better and better—are coming up in Amazing. Thanks for your letter, sir.*

Dear Editor:

"The Night We Died" by Henry Slesar, February issue of *Amazing* also "Vengeance of Galaxy 5" actually had that wonderful elusive sense of wonder. I liked the twist ending of "Vengeance," it made sense for a change. Don't usually like space opera, but these were really good.

A. Dooley
739 Newton Pl., N. W.
Washington 10, D. C.

Dear Editor:

I enjoy reading *Amazing* and I don't think I ever missed an issue. Combining a complete book-length novel plus short stories and features is just tops, in my estimation.

Leon Novich
1897 McCarter Hwy.
Newark 4, N. J.

• *There's a real rarity in this particular letter column. Have you noticed it? No brickbats this month. Not that they couldn't be back next and get their usual respectful attention. But knowing that everybody loves us this month is a wonderful feeling.*

TODAY IS FOREVER

BY
OSCAR FRIEND

ILLUSTRATED BY SUMMERS

BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE

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1. Explosion on Croton

ON THE morning of May 1st which came to be recorded in school history books as Duncan's Doom Day, Professor Duncan sat at breakfast in his usual pre-occupied manner across from his winsome wife, Martha, with her somewhat younger and equally pretty sister, Joan Winstance, at his left hand. He neither tossed his philosophic weight around as an autocrat of the breakfast table nor hid his brilliance behind the headlines of *The Croton-on-the-Hudson Tribune*.

Duncan was quiet almost to the point of vanishment. His tones, when he spoke, were calm and easy. Everything about him reflected a simple dignity, a friendly mood of tranquility. Such was the general character of Horatius Duncan, a mild but definitely persistent personality that was shielded behind a façade of bookish, intelligent, thoughtful mien. Professor Horatius Duncan at the age of forty-five.

His wife, Martha, at the doorway of twenty-eight, was a vivacious, willowy redhead who, with a few pointers from the beauty salons and Fifth Avenue dress shops, could have been luscious. Joan Winstance, an equally pretty young brunette of twenty-two, whose full-lipped, generous mouth was marred by a touch of sullenness, accepted a steaming cup and set it down before the professor on her right.

"Today is Dr. Miln's day," Mrs. Duncan said. "His Monday check-up on Mrs. Stanton. She's due to go to the hospital in a couple of months now."

This sudden thrust of a new conversational topic into the breakfast pool proved not in the least disconcerting to Joan. She caught the ball without a falter. "Two months? It seems only yesterday that Loretta told us about this fourth child. For a matron going on four years she seems grimly determined to produce one each anniversary as a sort of milestone marker of the years."

In fact, this suddenly new topic did not disturb the logical balance of Duncan's thoughts. He became instantly aware that his wife was making conversation by this off-hand comment on the physical well being of their nextdoor neighbor, Mrs. Russell Stanton, who was going through that interesting period of gestation known to the laity as "the family way," designated by Dr. Ignatz Miln, Croton-on-the-Hudson's foremost obstetrician, as just one more river to cross before he could head for Florida on a well-deserved vacation.

"It's her business," rejoined Martha. "With a baby born every two minutes in America today—I read that statistic somewhere recently—she is entitled to her quota. Don't you think so, Horatius?"

Professor Duncan, whose mind was busily unlocking the atom miles away at the Universal Electric Laboratories, roused with a guilty start. "I think Malthus was crazy," he answered dutifully. "Pass the cream, please."

"Well, I think it's pretty monotonous, myself," observed Joan, after digesting this tidbit of Malthian philosophy. "The idea of Loretta Stanton issuing a baby as regularly as though she were on a wartime production schedule

strikes me as being terribly quaint if nothing more."

"At least it is something," said Duncan dreamily, one topic leading him on to another by the association of ideas. "How are you getting on with Fred Whittier?"

"We haven't set the date yet, if that is what you mean. He's still working for his transfer to New York. That's all we're waiting for—just one good break. A bigger job on the *Graphic-Tribune*, and we'll marry and away to New York. I'll begin writing my own great American novel as soon as we're settled, too. I can't begin to write it before I've really begun to live, can I?"

"No," agreed the professor mildly. "But I'd suggest you had better start living it up right here in Crotton now. Time doesn't stand still, even for young lovers. Fred has a nice job here without a big break with a metropolitan newspaper."

Just this little fragment of conversation was enough to send Martha's mind careening off at a tangent. She thought of her own well-ordered existence, and the subject went flat. Out here in Crotton on a dead-end street of existence, definitely tagged and labeled in a blind alley of life, bottlenecked in the safety of white-collar respectability as the wife of a satisfied and plodding professor of research. Why, Duncan had even turned down Hiram Parker's tentative offer to be the head of Parker's plastic corporation—Parker's Plastic Products—Parker's up and coming manufacturing business that made everything of plastic from ten-cent toys to svelte trench coats, overshoes, and handbags.

Her mother, Mrs. Elias Winstance—who died at seventy-six—had always said that Handley

Burns or Luther Cronigle would have made a better marital catch than the quietly plodding Horatius Duncan whose only claim to greatness was the ostentation of his Christian name.

And now look at Martha! The aging wife of a stuffy professor who grew yearly more dusty and gray with his nose buried in scientific research for the Universal Electric Laboratories. She experienced the swiftly passing thought of wondering where and how she would have been situated had she married the flashy Handley Burns or the adventurous Luther Cronigle.

There was really no reason to censure Joan for being just a bit sullen and resentful about her situation in life. It was no wonder the girl wanted to better herself, to get into the world of things alive and bustling, to plunge into the swim of active, producing matters—to dream about writing the great American novel.

Yes, life was passing by for Martha as well as Joan. Here she was, twenty-eight years old, an aging married woman coupled to a dowdy old research scientist already too old and afraid to change jobs, a man so occupied and absent-minded that he forgot to kiss her before breakfast and never remembered to send her flowers on any anniversary of anything. Joan was right!

Completely unaware of this express train of speeding thought, Professor Duncan blandly proceeded prosaically down the track of Fred Whittier.

"It seems to me Fred makes enough salary and already stands pretty well recognized in his profession to make a staid and reli-



The explosion rocked Duncan back from the controls.

ble member of Croton's community. I wouldn't wait for a complete achievement of dream plans if I were you. One can always dream up a further set."

"Except you," added Martha shortly.

Duncan glanced at his wife, his eyebrows going up in faint surprise. How, exactly, had he stuck his foot into a hassle? Before his masculine mind came up with a proper understanding and analysis of the situation, Martha amplified.

"You have elected to stay on with the electric laboratory instead of going with Hiram Parker," she added.

"Oh, that!" he said, carelessly shrugging as the light dawned. "I just couldn't see making such a change right in the middle of the project of building that cyclotron. At least not before making the preliminary tests and putting it in operation."

"What tests?"

"To make sure that everything is all right," he explained patiently. "We are making the tests today—running the steam turbines off the atomic heat pile, and so forth. If we can successfully run the dynamo and thus generate sufficient electricity we shall become the third licensed plant in the entire country to operate. After the conclusive submarine tests atomic power is going to take the place at last of coal and oil in industry to work for peace instead of war."

"Which means what?" was Martha's unyielding attitude.

"In the first place, coal and oil, or any fire burnt to produce steam is messy, wasteful and dirty. Man is rapidly burning up all our resources to produce power. And we are consuming it in growing

quantities. Thus, if we prove successful we will be assured of enough power from atomic forces for the next hundred years. Water and sun power will remain our only rivals, and water and sun power are altogether impractical at our present stage of development to handle. So today we are making our first practical test—"

"Is that why you turned down Mr. Parker's offer to head his plastic operation?" interrupted Joan in quick interest.

"I—yes," was Duncan's simple answer.

"Don't forget Mrs. Parker's party tonight for Ivan Rusovski," prompted Martha at this juncture. "We have been invited to attend, Horatius. You are not forgetting that, are you?"

"Oh, no, not at all," hastily rejoined Duncan, flinching with involuntary dismay as he buttered a piece of toast.

A vision of Virginia Parker arose in his mind at mention of her name, a lady addicted to the wearing of a dazzling assortment of jewelry on her ample personage. Where different women adopted an assortment of earrings, or perfumes, or clothes, Mrs. Parker went in for jewels which made her appear like an unscheduled eruption of Mount Vesuvius. She presented a rather trying apparition to the professor.

Further than this, she was notorious for espousing the cause of half-baked geniuses, queer callings, or eccentric musicians. At present she was furthering the career of a Russian chap whose claim to fame was that he talked a bit reddish and played the piano.

Thought of Virginia Parker brought to mind her hard-headed

and practical husband whose efforts to establish a plastics empire were doomed to failure because there was no one to follow in Hiram's footsteps. Benjamin Parker, the son, and heir, was a nice enough sort of a rich man's son who was hipped on jet rockets. He was utterly and completely interested in jetting beyond Earth's envelope of atmosphere. Long before the advent of "Sputnik" his mind had been filled with visions of rockets to the Moon, not with the earthbound manufacturing of lowly plastic commodities.

Hiram Parker himself was a lean and dried sort of lichi nut with a dry sharp wit and a sharper tongue. A charming and delightfully "off the beam" family from some spot in Texas, rich and eminently successful.

"You don't forget it," Martha bore down. "We will go over with Fred not later than eight o'clock. Perhaps we may be early enough for Mr. Parker to talk with you some more about his plastic plant development. You might act more receptive to his problems. At least you can be interested and more sympathetic."

In some respects Professor Duncan was akin to a barometer; he could detect an atmospheric disturbance with psychic ease. While not having the foggiest notion as to the cause he knew intuitively that storm signals were suddenly flying.

"Yes, my dear," he replied, putting down his napkin and getting to his feet. "I must run along now. I've a very busy day ahead of me." Which was as graceful and orderly a withdrawal from a marital battlefield as anyone could make.

He drove down to the plant of the Universal Laboratory while he

gradually dissipated the fog of the intricacies of the feminine mind . . .

Upon his arrival at the atomic plant, he launched immediately into the project of heating the water jacket to turbine steam around the cooling units of the cyclotron. Then, housed in his specially erected cell with the three-foot-thick leaded-glass window and the insulated wall between himself and the cyclotron, he proceeded to manipulate the iron robotic claws which handled the uranium isotropes and to build up the electric power of the bombardment.

This was the crucial test. Just what went wrong nobody could say exactly. But the fact remained that at the estimated instant instead of a controlled manifestation of power he got an explosion. Fortunately there was no one else around in an unprotected area to be injured or killed, but Professor Duncan.

He was in a hospital.

He blinked his eyes in dismay and his methodical brain began going over each step in the operation of the new cyclotron, seeking the elusive answer to the physical explosion.

He was swiftly relieved of other mental worry by the gabby Dr. Snodgrass. "Ah! So you are snapping out of it, Professor? A pretty bad explosion, wasn't it? Lucky you had all that shielding about you. No bones broken. Just a few bruises and a skull contusion that knocked you out. Made quite a mess of your cyclotron though."

"Just—what—happened? I seem to remember counting to zero, then there was a red flash and an explosion. That's all."

"That was quite enough," endorsed the doctor. "The operational cell they dug you out of was a

mess. No other portion of the building was actually destroyed. Just what happened? Do you know?"

"No," answered the professor frankly, "I don't. I will have to reconstruct the entire process. You say no one else was hurt?"

"You are the only casualty," replied Dr. Snodgrass cheerfully. "Too bad all accidents aren't as fortunate. What am I saying? That would be very bad for the surgical business."

"Get through with your bandaging as quickly as possible, please," replied Duncan. "I've got to investigate the trouble and report to the government. This accident is just as important to them and more far-reaching than a federal investigation of a train wreck or an airplane crash."

"Nonsense."

It was hours before his release from the hospital. Night was falling by the time he returned to the scene of the accident.

The workers of the Universal Laboratories in their most efficient manner had set about cleaning up the mess as promptly as though the whole matter had been a well organized bomb drill. It took Professor Duncan far past quitting time to put a ring of guards about the scene and arrange for a thorough investigation the following day.

Then, after nine o'clock, looking more like a fugitive from an Egyptian tomb than a respected doctor of scientific research, Duncan went home.

It was not until he was entering the darkened and empty house that he recalled the social engagement that evening at the Hiram Parker residence.

"Oh, Lord," he groaned. "Now I am in for it."

2. The Grapefruit Pianist

THE social gathering at the Hiram Parker home was in full swing by the time Professor Duncan arrived. The place was aglitter with lights and the huge chandelier that hung out over the portico sparkled down on the horseshoe-shaped drive like an advertising sign. The neon effect was obtained from the pastel and rainbowesque beauty of the two- and three-toned motor cars which were garishly revealed by the light.

There was nothing save his own vagrant thoughts to make the professor feel that this was a loud, brash gathering of a motorcade at a hot dog stand in a well traveled zone rather than a quiet back street in an exclusive part of a residential section.

As he stood in the archway opening into the music room contemplating the scene he calculated how much intoxicating spirits at what proof it would require for a man of a given weight and stamina to catch up with the levity without sliding past, so to speak, on the curves.

This proved to be much of a problem in calculus, so he concentrated instead on the relaxed foolishness he could observe while he remained cold sober.

A tall, dark, thin young man with a wild hair-do and a thin black mustache was the center of attraction. He was seated at the piano, beating out one of the latest rock and roll numbers with a pair of grapefruit instead of ten fingers. The resultant sounds while

enough to drive Mozart mad were not entirely unpleasant. This energetic musician he recognized intuitively as Ivan Gregor Something-or-other, Mrs. Parker's current protégé.

By Ivan's side upon the piano bench sat Joan Winstance laughing at the directorial emceeing of a genuinely funny blond young chap whom he recognized as Fred Whittier.

His eyes probed further to note with a thrill of horror that Virginia Parker, his plump hostess, glittering like a circus horse in her jeweled finery and gushing about like an uncontrolled firehose was bearing down on him.

"Oh, my dear Professor Duncan!" she exclaimed, both eyebrows becoming twin arches of comic dismay at sight of his swamlike bandaging. "How simply delightful for you to come in masquerade! But this isn't a tacky party, really. Your wife must have misunderstood."

Professor Duncan accepted her comparative nomenclature grimly and without comment. She couldn't possibly be as addlepated and flighty as she seemed and be the wife of such a tough and wiry old hairpin as Hiram Parker. "I am sorry to be so tardy, Mrs. Parker. We had a little difficulty at the plant—nothing serious and nobody really injured—not even me. The medical staff merely made a fuss over it."

The music stopped abruptly as Fred Whittier caught sight of Duncan and nudged Joan. The pair of them came forward at once to greet the newcomer. Martha saw her husband and ran forward at sight of the bandaging around his head. "Horatius! What on

earth? They told me you weren't hurt!"

"I reported the accident at the electric plant, Professor," announced Whittier, gingerly taking Duncan's hand. "They wouldn't let me in at the hospital, insisting you were all right."

"I called as quickly as I heard," added Martha tremulously, her eyes darting all over Duncan's swathed figure. "Miss Bennett insisted that you were all right and would call me as soon as you returned from the hospital. Why didn't you call back, darling?"

"Miss Bennett was upset," explained Duncan, erasing her anxious frown with his fingertip. "The whole reception office was in a state of confusion. I didn't get your message. It's all right now. Don't let it upset you. I came on over as quickly as I could get matters straightened out. I'm sorry I'm late. Get back to your dancing. I see Hiram talking with Ben over there at a table. I'll join them."

"I insisted on Martha coming along with Joan and me," explained Whittier further. "I hope it doesn't seem too heartless."

"No, no, of course not. Thanks for playing escort." Duncan, smiled reassuringly into his wife's face. She was still frowning.

"You remember just why you are here, Horatius?" Martha inquired.

"Of course," he answered in scrupulous honesty. "I'm here because I promised you I'd come. But I must rebuild my cyclotron unit before I think of doing anything else."

"But, Horatius," she protested, at a loss to speak more explicitly before Mrs. Parker.

"Back to the piano before Ivan Gregor cools off," Whittier said,

covering the awkward silence for them all.

Duncan bowed slightly and moved away from the group. He approached the two Parker men seated at the little table against the far wall. Ben Parker was leaning across, gesticulating as he built up a tableful of things which were presumably fleets of rocket ships. Duncan noted how like his mother he appeared, how unlike his grim-faced father who sat listening to him with a patient but slightly jaundiced air. A hard-headed, flint-hearted banker, this financier, but at least he was listening, reflected Duncan; which was more than most parents could honestly claim in these days of juvenile delinquency.

Duncan drew up a chair between father and son and seated himself. "Good evening, gentlemen. A private discussion? Or can anyone take a hand?"

"Sure, sure, you by all means," rejoined Hiram Parker instantly. "We were all very sorry to hear about the explosion at the laboratory, Duncan. Tell us about it."

"Yes, please do," seconded the son in quick interest. "In principle that's the same kind of cyclotron being considered for Jasperson's rocket. If it proves untrustworthy in a power plant it will prove unreliable for space flight. What caused the explosion, Professor Duncan?"

"I can't say—yet," replied Duncan thoughtfully. "We can't rightly say just what caused it before I make a thorough examination. I hope to be able to answer you specifically next week, Ben. Everything was carefully built according to blueprint specifications—I think. I hope to be able to understand it as I build the plant back."

"Oh?" commented Hiram Parker, seemingly surprised. "Then you are going ahead with the project?"

The surprise was now Duncan's. "But of course, sir," he answered simply. "What else can I do? Universal has invested in the project. I can't just walk away and leave it. Just what rocket society is considering rocket power, Ben? And how will it be applied?"

The manner in which young Parker's face lighted up in a roseate glow was a revelation to Duncan. He gazed into the guileless open countenance and the wide, alert, happy blue eyes at his polite scrap of a question and suddenly he knew why Hiram Parker was turning so desperately aside in search of a plastic plant manager. He needed one. He did not have suitable timber in his son.

"The Goddard Society," Benjamin responded, happily, "is still experimenting. The problem of fuel is our biggest puzzle. You see, the use of nitric acid, of potassium permanganate and hydrogen peroxide—of all forms of propulsive power for the first trip especially are imperatively important. There is no service station between Earth and Moon—not even on the Moon itself for replenishment for the return trip.

"True, we have solved this problem by launching first a series of supply rockets that will be robot-controlled and carrying simply return loads of fuel. These rockets will be fitted with war heads of powdered glass, or suitable material which will be visible to trained astronomers, so that when they hit the Moon their position can be charted so that the last man-powered rocket can be guaranteed sufficient fuel supply

already on the Moon for a return trip.

"But besides the Herculean task of gathering all that fuel, we will eliminate the tremendous cost of building a series of rockets to carry it there if we can power our main rocket with an atomic cyclotron which can carry the fuel necessary to make the flight both ways. As soon as this problem is solved the construction of a passenger-carrying rocket is only a matter of finished planning and of a certain amount of money. Now I—"

"You will put no Parker cash into such a far-fetched, hare-brained scheme," snorted Hiram Parker, angrily impatient with such conversation. "It's crazy even to let you talk about putting the life of a Parker in jeopardy."

"Talk?" instantly responded the son, hotly taking up the gauge of battle. "You know that I am a member of the rocket society and that I have dedicated my life to the career of a flight engineer. I have already volunteered for the first flight. I will not be shackled to the grubby destiny of a plastics manufacturer!"

At once father and son were off again in their unending argument of plastics versus Moon rockets. It reminded Duncan somewhat of the classical debatable subject during his own college days. "Resolved that a mule, passing between two equally apportioned haystacks, will turn first to the right side rather than to the left." Or that other old saw about the meeting of the irresistible force and the immovable object.

He tried honestly to look with sympathy on both sides of the present argument, and found him-

self torn between the two loyalties. Now was really the psychological moment to put in his own bid for the plastics contingent, but he found that he couldn't do it. Not only would he be undermining Benjamin but he himself was struggling between the proper solution of an atomic power plant for industry to use in the years ahead or to settle down to the humdrum business of manufacturing plastic gim-cracks with the daily shrinking power of coal and oil.

So his attention wandered. Glancing across the room he saw Martha and Joan in a huddle with Whittier, laughing and talking rapidly. It struck him pleasantly to see the Winstance sisters happy and gay. From which random thought his mind moved on to the figure of the newspaperman himself.

What Whittier secretly thought about Joan's rather lofty aspiration for writing the great American novel was impossible to fathom, for Whittier never referred to it. True, the idea was rather pretentious if nothing more. Yet why shouldn't Joan harbor such a dream? Other people, many of them lower in education and intelligence than she, had dreamed up more marvelous things than that of merely writing a book. And they had been heartily laughed at for their dreams, many of which they had brought into reality. So he was not going to laugh at or discourage Joan's ambition any more than the patient Whittier.

The newspaperman must have secretly entertained a certain sympathy for his sweetheart's determined pursuit of a fixed idea. Duncan could not recall a single instance wherein Whittier had



Only an idiot, it seemed, would play the piano in this fashion.

made light of the girl's avowed intention or thrown one drop of cold water on her voiced desire whether he took any serious stock in her dream or not. A very nice sort of chap, Whittier, with an innate sense of the dignity and fitness of things. He grew on a person, Duncan decided.

The uproar about the piano subsided as the grapefruit expert desisted from his banging and arose to his feet. Couples began to drift away from the musical instrument. The bustling Mrs. Parker bore down on her protégé and in unison the pair steamed together on the hapless Parker contingent with Duncan at the little table across the room.

"Oh, you poor, poor scientific men!" the lady exclaimed, drawing up another chair and plumping down at the table. "Get that other chair there, Ivan, dear boy. Hiram, you have missed a delightful and—"

"What makes you think we missed it?" interrupted her husband in a tired voice.

"—entertaining concert," went on Mrs. Parker, not at all perturbed at her husband's snide remark. "Bennie, darling, you would benefit far more by listening to Liszt and Chopin as Ivan interprets them than by spending so much of your time on those musty rockets of yours."

"He would get as much out of it for sure," commented Hiram acridly. "But I can think of a more profitable disposition of grapefruit than by bruising them on piano keys."

"I can't," dismissed Benjamin thoughtfully. "They're too bulky for storage space in a food locker. And there's spoilage, too."

"Not if you concentrated them and packed the juice in plastic containers," said his father.

"Yes, that's right," said Benjamin in quick interest, sitting up straight in his chair. "Not too sweet for liquid—both food and drink at the same time. Just a little reinforcing with vitamin content and there you are!"

At last father and son seemed in accord.

"You American businessmen!" protested Mr. Rusovski with the faintest trace of a Russian accent which he broadened deliberately into the accepted accent familiar to the Anglo-Saxon ear. A true phony if there ever was one, reflected Duncan cynically.

"You take the wrong view," went on Rusovski. "When I have finished hammering the grapefruit as musical instruments, I have ruined them as items of food. Thus, I manage to keep up the established price without the need of strikes and walkouts, no?"

"No," responded Mr. Parker in curt frankness.

Without the slightest sign of affront Mr. Rusovski straddled the chair he had captured at his hostess' bidding and hitched it around until it was close beside the seat of Professor Duncan. "That was an unfortunate blow-up you had this morning, wasn't it, Professor Duncan? It was your cyclotron plant that you were building?"

"Yes," admitted Duncan, almost as curt as Hiram Parker as he looked more intently at his accost-er. "It was."

"Have you discovered the cause yet?" went on Rusovski. "It could have been the wiring, you know. Sometimes just the slightest error in wiring can be the cause of freakish accidents. I recall how the

grass and shrubbery around the Mollinsk plant almost overgrew it before the scientists discovered there was an error in the wiring of one of the circuits. They had to cut the grass and trim the hedge twice as often as normal. It was a laughable mistake."

"Is that so?" inquired Duncan idly, his interest barely awakened. He was not yet warmed up to this bumptious grapefruit musician. "That is possible I'm sure."

"Oh, yes. Such was the first attempt to harness the atom at the Waldoreff Works near Mollinsk in Nineteen fifty-three," went on Rusovski easily.

"Mollinsk in Nineteen fifty-three?" spoke up Benjamin Parker in sudden interest. "What do you know of Mollinsk, Rusovski?"

"I was employed on the project," responded the Russian in an off-hand manner that faded into a deprecatory air as he continued speaking. "Of course I was only a building technician. I did not have the education of a scientist."

Duncan became aware of a flicker of interest in spite of himself. But before he could turn the conversation into an exploratory, interesting channel the dry and acid voice of Hiram Parker interposed.

"You took up piano playing as the more profitable venture, I assume."

"Yes, with grapefruit," returned Rusovski evenly. "It is the out of the ordinary that attracts attention. You Americans are highly curious, you know."

"Oh, yes, Ivan!" chimed in Virginia Parker with a sudden rush of memory. "Remember that you are to play Romanoff's Symphony with grapefruit at Mrs. Bennefield's concerto next Tuesday. Don't forget."

Somewhat the conversation got out of hand and drifted away from science and matters of interest that would have tied Duncan up with Rusovski. So he arose and left Virginia Parker simpering over her protégé's gallantry while Hiram and Benjamin resumed their endless abstract discussion which had now concerned the correct provisioning of a spatial craft of Moon-rocketing ability.

He caught sight of Martha absently fingering the piano's abused keys while Fred and Joan were disappearing through the hall archway. He excused himself and joined his wife at the piano. She looked up swiftly and smiled slightly.

"Oh, Horatius," she murmured in quick sympathy, "was it really so bad? You look pretty well beaten. Like—Horatius at the Bridge."

"Quite apt," he agreed with a slightly wry smile. "It wasn't too rough. The doctors' staff proved worse than two explosions would have been. I've got a headache now is all."

"Don't you want to go home and lie down?" she asked. "I don't mind. You've had your talk with Mr. Parker? When will you be switching over to Parker Plastics?"

"Oh, Martha! I don't think that I will be."

"What? Oh, Horatius!"

"I'm sorry, honey, but I've got to rebuild the cyclotron plant. That's the only honorable thing for me to do. Please try to understand."

She did not answer, just stared at him, and then began picking some tuneless air on the piano keyboard with one finger.

"I'm sorry," he repeated humbly. "Where are Fred and Joan?"

"Don't worry about them, Fred can manage. I'll go and make our adieu to Mrs. Parker. Then we'll go home."

Duncan didn't argue the point. He felt an increasing soreness all over and the bandages were beginning to itch. He rose and strolled out into the cooler hallway. To his surprise he almost blundered into the forms of Joan and Fred where they stood clasped in the semi-darkness. He drew back swiftly, but the pair remained oblivious to his existence.

"Ah, yes," he reflected, "the second installment of the great American novel."

3. Introduction to Chaos

THE first thing that became apparent to the world, when it took the time to stop and think, was the sudden, inexplicable, cessation in the birth rate. There was not one human birth later than May 10th, the day of the explosion at the Croton cyclotron plant.

This profound peculiarity took a certain length of time to set an established pattern that could be accurately read much less be interpreted correctly. All this was due to the initiatory work of Dr. Miln and Fred Whittier.

To have described Dr. Ignatz Miln adequately would have put Fred Whittier himself hard against it, and Fred was trained and paid to do such reportorial work expertly. In fact, it would have required a Franz Hal even to have painted his portrait. Dr. Miln was a queer sort of bug to pin down.

It took at least three visits before a person could begin to comprehend his personality and

get acquainted with him. It was not that he was conscientiously aloof or deliberately eccentric, for he was not. It was just that people stood in awe of his profession.

In appearance Dr. Miln was mildly quizzical. He had a neatly trimmed halo of soft, white hair and a sweet sort of benign bedside manner that changed only in degree rather than in kind. His mild gray eyes were framed by a facial expression which looked out upon the oddities of the world in a fashion of constant surprise. While he trotted back and forth in his round of duties in the manner of a sleepy and tolerant pet pony. Dr. Ignatz Miln.

The Monday following the explosion at the atomic laboratory Dr. Miln paid his weekly visit to Mrs. Russell Stanton to ascertain her condition. That there was no perceptible change in the advance of her development did not force itself upon his attention as precipitantly as a person might suppose. He was not expecting any sort of denouement in the first place, and it would have taken instruments much finer than those employed in the general practice of the medical profession to have ascertained that Mrs. Stanton was only a fraction further along the pathway to maternity.

However it did not require the services of an IBM calculator to perceive that Mrs. Stanton had either misfigured her dates badly or that the calendar was off thirty days. Nevertheless, thirty days of error was an allowable margin for miscalculations and there was nothing unusual about it. Dr. Miln had had dozens of baby cases where the pregnancy date was uncertain and weary mothers and ex-

pectant fathers had to await with resignation the duly ordained birth date of the expected individual. Thus, the delay of thirty days for Baby Stanton passed without exciting undue comment.

But the passage of an additional thirty days became downright baffling! No doctor ever made a mistake of sixty days in his figures and no mother in escrow ever took more than four weeks of extra time in delivery details. No wonder Dr. Miln bundled Mrs. Stanton up and rushed her to the hospital where he could make tests.

He thus established beyond all doubt that the gestation of the Stanton Pregnancy Case stood at approximately seven months, and he had the date line and the records of St. Marks Hospital to show for it. This establishment of the time element, while dismaying and confusing in the extreme, served a very useful purpose in the end.

All this had to do with the passage of the two months following Professor Duncan's cyclotron explosion. The next incident was the cancellation again of her reserved hospital room. And this proved too much for the patience of the annoyed and baffled Dr. Miln. Forthwith he took Mrs. Stanton back to the hospital. Again he conducted a thorough examination. The findings were that Mrs. Stanton was in an approximate seventh month period of gestation.

But this was crazy. Dr. Miln began walking hard on his heels, shaking his head, and mumbling into his coffee cup. This sort of careless bookkeeping set the practice of modern obstetrics back at least a hundred years. It created more confusion then when a woman of the backwoods inadvertently mislaid her notch stick.

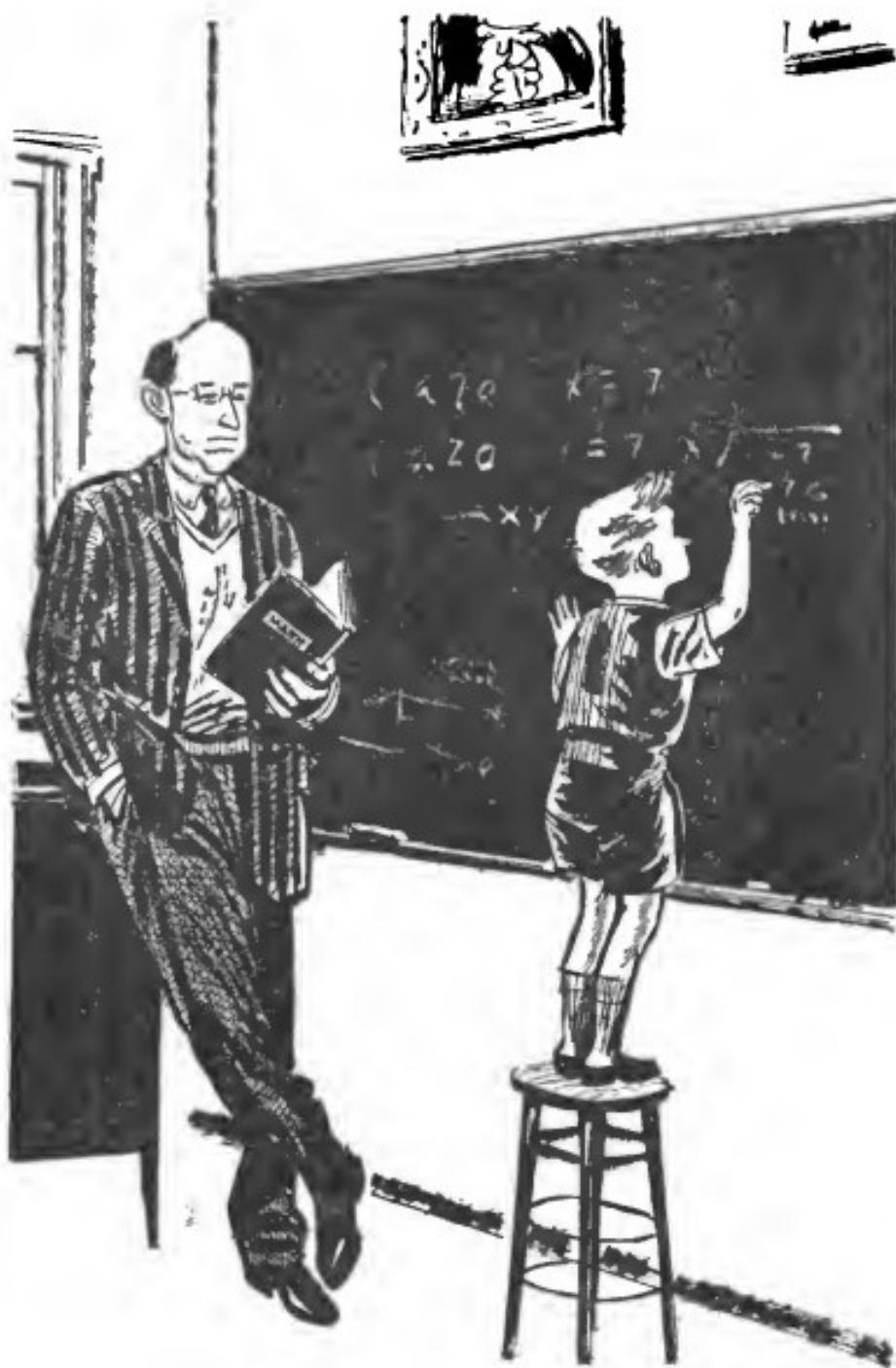
The summation of the whole mysterious matter was that Mrs. Russell Stanton was a full three months overdue. There had been a few cases in medical jurisprudence of a human mammal requiring a gestation period of ten months. Fortunately these were comparatively rare. Thus, when Mrs. Stanton continued to hover on the brink with a substantiated gestation of an unchanging seven months Dr. Miln realized that he was facing a problem never before encountered in the history of obstetrics.

All thought of a well-ordered vacation left him. He began staying up at all hours of the night re-reading his college courses from obscure physiology to the latest theories which governed mankind and reconciled his natural habits and evolutionary history with his environment. He read everything on the subject that he could unearth. He consulted with every medical authority he could think of.

And learned nothing.

He was smothered under a plethora of medical practice anyhow, but the stubborn stagnation of obstetrics confused him. The case of Mrs. Russell Stanton, however, proved not to be a rarity. She was proceeding normally and in complete accord with the rest of the world. For, unaccountably the birth rate around the entire globe had completely ceased. But Dr. Miln did not know this before his chat with Fred Whittier at the Rotary Club luncheon. This is not to say that other familiar patterns had not also changed, but obstetrics was the one theme that Dr. Miln was thoroughly familiar with, came into daily contact with.

"Twelve months!" marveled the



In the new order of things, four-year-olds were
wrestling with Einstein.

reporter, when Dr. Miln told him of the second hospital examination. "A full year of gestation? Why that's as bad as an elephant!"

"It is worse," insisted Dr. Miln, "because it is unnatural."

"But how did the hospital staff come to make such an error? Two months!" puzzled Whittier. "That's as much a mystery as the case itself."

"There's nothing abnormal about Mrs. Stanton. She has borne three children already, three normal children, mind you, and I cannot allow you undue publicity. But have there been any other cases that are even remotely similar which have been reported anywhere else in the world?"

"I don't know," admitted Whittier. "I'll scout around and see. I'll call you later, Doctor."

"Thank you," acknowledged Miln gratefully. "I will appreciate it."

That's how it started. The upshot of that chance conversation was Whittier's participation in the matter. His alert reportorial mind was directed in a new channel of investigation and observation. He called the baffled doctor by phone before midnight that same evening.

"The picture is not yet complete, Dr. Miln," he duly reported, "but I can give you some odd information right now. Croton has not had a single birth since the ninth of May. Neither has any other nearby settlement that I have been able to get any reliable figures on. Two reporters are making a complete check on New York City at the present moment, and I have urgent cablegrams to Paris, London, and Buenos Aires out for answer. The supreme test, of course, will come from Delhi, Hong Kong, and Jack-

son Heights. It's odd that nobody in the world has made an investigation before."

"I've thought of that," replied Miln. "In fact, I've thought of a thousand queer angles. Perhaps this one case of mine happens to be the only one to have hospital substantiation. Babies have simply stopped being born. Quite by a lucky accident I got Mrs. Stanton reported at St. Mark's hospital at the stage of seven months' gestation two months ago. And again yesterday at the hospital we had identically the same report. For some peculiar reason time is standing still in obstetrics."

There was silence while the doctor fumed in thought.

Then: "There are other angles to think about, Whittier," he said. "Don't—"

"Yes, sir," cut in the reporter quickly. "I've already thought of a few. I put in for other statistics, and I learned that old people are still dying at the usual rate. People are still drowning on holidays and are daily being killed in traffic accidents. So we have no sudden wave of immortality. Working men are still dying as a result of labor casualties. So humankind has not inherited the mantle of immortality."

"You've already said that," rebuked the doctor. "What you tell me is reflected in the practice of every physician I know of in Croton. There is the normal figure in deaths, but there are no births at all. Are you implying that this condition is world wide?"

"Yes, sir, I am."

There was a silence after which Dr. Miln said, "The condition is more than serious. At this rate the population is shrinking at a deter-

minable daily rate. A world crisis is inevitable. How sure are you of your facts and figures, Whittier?"

"Positive, but of course I'll check them again."

"By all means do so. And let me know—quietly."

A painstaking check and an accurate tabulation of mortality figures revealed a complete stagnation in birth statistics and a definite measurable shrinkage in population figures which, though small, was steady and would finally affect the world disadvantageously.

The obvious conclusion was inescapable. The human race, regardless of skin, color, creed, and ideology, was on its way out.

When these conditions became obvious and a startled, then frightened world began accepting them as facts, the first day of May became grimly known as Duncan's Doomsday, and was coupled with the unquestionable curse of immortality.

There was a secondary and economic stress to the overall problem that began proving just as much of a headache although contributing scarcely so dangerous an aspect as that of steadily shrinking population. This was the gradual stoppage of consumption of goods and services for babies. The gradual disuse of diaper services, baby clothes, toys—in fact, of all articles of baby manufacture showed the pinch of having no new babies in the world to have an undreamed of and far-reaching effect.

And immediately upon the heels of this came mounting disuse of baby furniture and toys. No more high chairs, play pens, toddlers, carts, perambulators. Nothing in the baby line such as cribs, bassinets, baby beds. The purveyors and manufacturers of such things

simply dwindled away, branched into other lines, or ceased to exist. As time went on and the pattern slowly established itself there was even greater economic stress in other fields of endeavor. It proved worse than the old and oft quoted example of a rolling snowball or the dropping of a pebble into the mill pond to watch the enlarging circles of ripples.

That this readjustment of conditions made direct changes in the way of life was inevitable. The next things to be affected *en masse* were the building trades and the educational system.

4. Catastrophe Compounded

IN THE first half of the Twentieth Century, there lived in Europe a madman whose rallying call was "Lebensraum." Through this theme of preaching he was instrumental in launching the juggernaut of a terrific world war upon the people of this luckless planet.

What he preached was basically the theory that the human race was too rapidly filling this world. While this may have had the ring of truth, his methods of correction left much to be desired. In essence, he said, "There is not enough room on Earth for both thee and me. Therefore it is necessary for thee to get off."

However, this unsocial gentleman could not have anticipated Duncan's Doom Day nor have dreamed of the ghastly and far-reaching upheaval of such a world condition.

First there was the non-arrival of the wave of babies that they had expected to present a problem

in the face of the housing shortage and the ill-equipped educational centers of America intensified by the lack of adequate school facilities through the elementary and secondary years of education.

That wave just did not materialize. While America was tardily and sluggishly gearing itself to take care of the emergency, there simply ceased to be an emergency. The anticipated drive was no longer in evidence. The crying need for more school rooms unaccountably let up. The acute demand for more teachers reversed to oversupply. Baby-sitting became a lost art.

Logically enough, as time spun on out through the years the crops of expected mammalians grew smaller and more delicate of physique. The succeeding college classes began more and more to resemble kindergarten gatherings or collections of midgets. Football and all other sports gradually fell into discard, because nobody grew sufficiently into man's estate to participate. It began to look as though they would eventually be wheeling new entrants to school in baby carriages.

This opened another page in Whittier's case book, and another field of speculation for Dr. Miln. Not only were infants no longer being born, but those already on Earth had ceased their physical growth, or grew so slowly that time apparently stood still. Thus, year after year, the succeeding classes continued to shrink in size and in physical stature, in strength and in muscle power.

But mentally there was no change.

It thus became obvious that the mind did not halt. Intelligence proceeded along its accustomed path

in its usual manner. Ignorance and the acquisition of knowledge did not partake in this new metabolic state of matter.

Neither was there any change spiritually. The human mind continued serenely to mature, neither faster nor slower. Whatever catastrophe had occurred was strictly one pertaining to matter; it proved to have no bearing spiritually. Which only served to confuse Dr. Ignatz Miln all the more. The enigma was still unanswered.

The change in the growth and conditioning of matter proved sufficient to slowly wreak havoc and chaos in the world. First of all, there was the complete absence of required physical room. This was caused, clearly, by the size of the current inmates and the reduction of quantity. Thus, it followed that there was no need for the oversized class room furniture. And a growing need of midget-sized adult furniture, automobiles, knick-knacks, and so on. It began to require less material of all kinds to make things. It was as though the artifacts required for a civilization of six-foot inhabitants had been deliberately cut in two and now was needed only in three-foot dimensions. Only this wasn't so. As the years began to pile up these midgets slowly grew to reach their hereditary size.

The ridiculous confusion of sizes and conflicting methods of numbering or lettering them became elementary as time wore along and the entire world remained frozen in this incomprehensible stasis of growth. The only things that didn't change were the funeral arrangements and the coffins used for the gradually dying off of "normal" members of society.

Thus, this lack of growth finally

made itself felt in the building trades. Not only was there a growing lack of demand for new houses but those which were required reflected in a thousand ways the changing necessities of people. This in turn made itself felt by the builders.

Carpenters, plumbers, electricians, bricklayers, plasterers all had to conform to the demands for new houses which required new measurements.

Then at last the electrical gadgets had to be scaled down to size for each individual. And the same sort of growing confusion reigned now in shoes and ready-made clothing. Everything had to be tailored now individually or carried in such a surprising number of shapes and sizes that the result was pandemonium. No longer was it possible to manufacture anything in quantity for the public. Prices accordingly mounted and confusion reigned. Only the manufacturers of items that did not change in size and were deemed absolute necessities, such as handkerchiefs, neckties, dishes, dining room and kitchen wares remained lucky.

In turn the requirement of smaller houses and shorter beds made its demand on realtors for smaller lots on shorter streets. This in time was reflected in smaller porch and lawn furniture, smaller lawn mowers, shorter hoses, and smaller basement home workshop tools and equipment. In brief, everything in the world was shrinking, gradually being reduced in size and reproduced for midgets.

It was a horrible period of readjustment to an unforeseen end that would have taken full fifty years to work itself out had not the realization of the trouble been discov-

ered, the accurate measuring stick found, and at length the frantically sought solution to the whole problem presented. This has to do with Professor Horatius Duncan, who achieved fame and had greatness thrust upon him for doing that which he had no power to prevent.

But before we return to Croton-on-the-Hudson let us trace another world-wide pattern over the shoulder of Fred Whittier: The decline of muscle power which Whittier followed grimly to the end. Which was, of course, a major problem of the various labor unions.

This development soon began working tremendous reversals upon the dock stevedores union, the garment worker guilds, the teams-ters, the coal mine laborers—on every grouping of every kind of working man known. For the first time in human history there were not two men for every job; there were three jobs or more for every man.

It was not because there were not enough members to contribute sufficient dollars to keep the coffers overflowing to maintain the various unions. Not at all. The crisis had advanced far beyond that. It was the need of sheer man power that hurt the unions and the world. In spite of the many uses of machinery, steam power, gears, shovels and motors, there simply was not enough plain human muscle and beef in overalls to handle the details. Now more than ever before an acute need of robots was established.

The world possessed ditch diggers, factory workers, glass blowers—all sorts of elaborate machines—but there were just not enough human fingers to push the buttons and work the levers. There was a steadily growing

THE END IS HERE



Strange cults sprang up all over the world.

shortage of human beings to operate the taxicabs, the subway trains, the buses and rocket planes, the simple elevators.

Wars were slackening and languishing all over the world because there were no longer men around to fight them. Standing armies began to sit down. Recruiting and conscription no longer served to bring up the required strength for the reason that cannon fodder was disappearing from existence.

For the first time the world realized how everything was keyed and integrated with everything else. Only thus was anything worthwhile advanced, was anything invented, or built, or improved, or even used. Only by the multiplied units of sheer manpower did the whole world move, was anything momentous accomplished. But people were now desperately scraping the bottom of the barrel, and the high moral tone of the lesson was as nothing.

Everything everywhere began to stagnate. Activities withered and died. Ocean travel, expeditions, exploration ground to a halt because of insufficient personnel. Myriad lines of trade simply disappeared.

Thus the disease spread until all the advances and outposts of civilization became deserted shells given over to ruin and decay. All the shipping on all the oceans dwindled away and finally within the span of a decade the entire world began to take on the appearance of a deserted planet. The world, from the viewpoint of the most sanguine, was on its last legs.

No longer were there painstaking rocket tests and atomic bomb explosions. No longer was there talk of the yellow peril, of the in-

justice of the whites to the colored races, of Russian dominance of the way of life. For the color of skin and the color of conflicting ideologies no longer concerned the inhabitants of the Earth. The American integration of schools became an empty, useless symbol. For what difference did it make what color the skin was if only enough youth and life and laughter of any kind could be gathered together to chase the ghosts of wasted yesterdays and fill up once again the fast-emptying classrooms of every nation.

It is not to be thought that this queer, dimly understood catastrophe poised as a threat to every race of man was watched with apathy or stolid complacency. But no one kept cases as zealously anywhere in the world as Dr. Miln and Fred Whittier. There were investigations of all kinds in every part of the world; many and varied were the conferences of physicians, and everywhere there were mass meetings of all types and descriptions. Among the lunatic fringe there were End-of-the-World groups, mobs, and uprisings by unenlightened throngs who knew not whom they were gathering against nor what actually were the purposes of their gatherings.

Thus, the world stood on the brink of hysteria, and an uprising, the ramifications of which were not understood when another part of this global problem gradually came into focus.

5. Crazy World

THE shortage of manpower which was coupled so closely with the shortage of boy and girl

power had not had time to work itself out to the ultimate end before another problem presented itself to a bewildered and perplexed world.

This started as a question of purchasing that extra bar of cosmetic soap or buying a small or large jar of cleansing cream. What was the need of beauty rituals when the mirror showed no sign of aging or change? There was not a wrinkle, not one gray hair, nor the suspicion of a liver blotch or the slightest discoloration of the skin. Why then weary one's arm muscles with the useless toil of rubbing in gobs of messy cold creams or soapy lather and scrubbing it all out again? It seemed totally unnecessary.

Thus, age fighters of all kinds were on their way out. This emancipation was followed almost immediately by lipstick and kindred beauty aids. In almost no time cosmetics were discarded as an outgrown barbarism. So the various cosmetic companies began closing their doors and shutting up shop. This in logical turn began to affect the various advertising mediums, and an endless chain of repercussions and retrenchments set in.

All of which brings us face to face with the action of Celeste Sprague, beauty contest winner of the corn belt for the previous year, and the resultant action of Mr. George T. Martinez, president and principal stockholder of the powerful Houri Cosmetic Company of America.

A badly worried and harassed man was Mr. Martinez the evening he broke the news to Miss Sprague at dinner in the swanky Flamingo Club on Park Avenue. As the admitted fiancé of the lady in ques-

tion his confidential conference with her went as follows:

"Frankly, Celeste babe, I don't understand what has gone wrong with the world. First, we have no new babies. And now we have no ugly ducklings."

"Meaning what, darling?" carelessly rejoined Miss Sprague.

"The growing disuse of cosmetics in general. Helena Frankenstein closed her doors this week, and the five Eastmore brothers have just applied for bankruptcy."

"How odd," shrugged Miss Sprague heartlessly. "The elimination of competition should make business boom for Houri."

"Yes," agreed Martinez, "but it doesn't. That's what I meant when I said the whole world is crazy. Now it's not what Houri wants to do, but it has become a stark necessity as to what Houri has to do. I've put off making such a decision to the last minute. But every morning thirty million housewives in America look into their bathroom mirrors, stick out their pink tongues, examine their teeth, and find not a single sign of aging. They remain as youthful looking and as beautiful as they looked a month ago—a year ago—as far back as they can remember, and they simply have stopped using cosmetics."

"You don't say!"

"Of course, I am glad for them, but Houri is facing a crisis! The Houri Company is facing ruin!"

Miss Sprague looked at him, now interested.

"So at last," went on Martinez, "I am dropping our useless advertising campaigns completely. It's become ridiculous to advertise how to stay young to people who never grow old. We will have to adver-

tise how to make the ugly duckling grow more glamorous, instead. We will have to meet the changed conditions and completely readjust our lines. We no longer need an already beautiful actress or celebrity to sponsor our products; we need an ugly duckling to feature and use our cosmetics. No longer do we have to mention silvering hair, the growth of ugly wrinkles, the muddying skin—all the routine of advancing age. For nobody grows older and uglier nowadays. The entire business is crazy!"

Celeste Sprague froze—arrested in the midst of applying an unnecessary bit of lipstick. She surveyed the speaker with a calculating greenish blue-eyed stare of distaste. She was a lovely looking creature of sinuous grace sheathed in her gown of iridescent satin that shimmered and reflected dozens of pastel shades.

"You mean, George," she murmured gently, "that Houri is trying to wriggle out of its five-year contract with me?"

"No, I didn't mean that at all, Babe," he protested quickly. "But what difference does it make when you and I are engaged to be married anyway? What I mean is that people all over the world are no longer flocking to the cosmetic counters to buy Houri beauty aids—no matter how we advertise—no matter how anyone advertises. Houri Cosmetics has become a raft that's slowly sinking under our feet. We will simply have to cancel all of our advertising contracts as of right now and refigure the entire line if we're to stay in business!"

"You're off your rocker!"

"Either that or attempt to ride things on through and go broke in

the process. We'll fail if the world doesn't hurry up and pull itself out of the general slump. It makes very little difference, but the honorable thing for Houri to do is to tell everybody concerned the blunt, actual truth, and close up shop while we are still solvent. You see that don't you, baby?"

"I see something for the birds," observed Miss Sprague frankly.

"Yes," agreed Martinez ruefully. "The turkey buzzards."

"You mean you simply refuse to complete your outstanding contracts?" pursued Celeste grimly. "You mean to imply that Houri Cosmetics has come to this?"

"Unless we can find a remedy."

"And if you're serious," continued Miss Sprague in the same frank vein, "you'd better start hunting another blonde."

Martinez stared at her blankly. "What are you saying, Celeste? You don't believe me? You think I'm joking?"

Miss Sprague glared across the table with coldly level and appraising green eyes.

"I simply mean that without your business you're disgusting and revolting," she informed him.

"What do you—?"

"I mean that unless you're joking, you and I are through. Furthermore, I'll slap a suit on Houri that will make you wish you'd stayed in bed. Do I make myself plain?"

"You—you don't mean that you are not going to marry me?"

"Have you ever heard of Mr. Philip Grayson Abbott?" she inquired conversationally. "The broker and market investor? The sales promoter?"

Martinez stared. That Celeste Sprague was a selfish, calculating

little bitch was no news to him. But that she could be wantonly cruel was definitely on the debit side.

"Philip—Grayson—Abbott?" he repeated slowly. "You intend throwing me over—for him?"

She shrugged. "Houri is facing ruin—or so you have just told me. So what has Houri got? Or, which is more to the point, how much have you got?"

"But—but what about our love?" he asked desperately. "What about all the money I spent on you? All the gifts? Our marriage? All the fun we've had together? Everything!"

"We've had it, George. My lawyer will call you in the morning about my TV contract. And don't let his smile fool you."

"Baby—"

"Good night, sweet prince. Thanks for the dinner."

She arose, and Mr. Martinez watched her with bitterly disillusioned eyes. She had not even given him time to get to his feet, so abrupt was her departure.

"Shall I serve the dinner now, sir?" murmured Number Thirteen.

"Yeah," rejoined the president of Houri Cosmetics. "And eat it yourself." He got up and followed Miss Sprague out of the dining room at a fast clip.

The waiter looked after him in bewilderment. "Now what did I do?" he muttered helplessly.

The name Celeste Sprague had hurled at Mr. Martinez was not unknown to him. And it stung. Philip Grayson Abbott was catching on. He was at the moment the fair-haired boy of Wall Street. Little enough was known of his background but he was glibly handsome in a slick kind of blonde fashion and seemed to have plenty of

money. Mr. Martinez, understandably didn't like him.

After a session with his own lawyer wherein he drew in his horns regarding the matter of broken advertising contracts his thoughts turned to Hiram Parker with the dim hope that the plastic manufacturer might come up with something that could save Houri. He boarded the New York Central at once and rode up to Croton-on-the-Hudson.

"Martinez!" Hiram Parker said. "Pleasant surprise! How have you been?"

"I'm healthy as all hell. Isn't everybody?"

"The only way to be. So what is it? You want to cry on my shoulder, eh? I'll bet you're snooping around for new ideas to dress up your package line. Some new plastic gadget you can dream up to add to your cosmetics?"

"I wish it was that simple," sighed Martinez.

"If I have it you can get it—if it isn't tied up," Parker said shrewdly. "We'll discuss it at dinner. You'll feel much better after a standing roast and a bottle of Sauterne. What are you after? A new type of lipstick holder? Or maybe another kind of hair spray container?"

"Anything that will sell will be all right."

"You sound hopeless. What you need is a go-getter. Somebody like the fellow Mrs. Parker recently latched on to. He'll be at the house this evening."

"Who is he?"

"I don't know exactly—a New Yorker named Abbott. A whiz from your town."

"ABBOTT! Philip Grayson Abbott?"

"Why, yes, I believe so. Do you know him?"

"No," said Martinez. "But I'll be pleased to meet him."

"You can have him if you want. Just don't make any passes at Professor Duncan. He's mine."

The name did not ring any bells for Mr. Martinez and thus it was that the president of the Houri Cosmetic Company met that evening the two men destined to change his entire future.

6. The Aging Professor

SO A DECADE had passed and it was the evening of Professor Duncan's second appearance on party night at Virginia Parker's where he met the glib Philip Grayson Abbott and the melancholy Mr. Martinez. And one more fact of interest came to light. The passing time had not spared Professor Duncan himself. Horatius had grown ten years older . . .

There was a great deal more to it than that. When observed through the eyes of a person completely involved in the drama, when the growing crisis gradually built up about one, when a person lived on without knowing just what he was living on into, the entire perspective was different. This was Horatius Duncan's fate, a realization that he alone, of all the millions that trod the Earth, was the only person who aged.

It did not seem possible that nearly ten years had passed since Virginia Parker had given her party for the benefit of her grapefruit-piano-playing celebrity. In fact it seems odd that the world had drifted along in the same canoe with nobody alert to the

passage of time. All had flowed smoothly on with no time-keeper to tally the hours.

The entire business was inexplicable.

It was one morning before the telltale bathroom mirror that Professor Duncan suddenly made his weird discovery. Yet to call it weird is really a misnomer. That it took some time for this peculiar phenomenon to dawn on him is quite logical. As the years wore on, drilling inexorably into the future, Professor Duncan became gradually aware of a physiological time change in his physical condition; that the mysterious clock mortal man had labeled "time" had somehow stopped for all other living human mammals. For Horatius Duncan, inexplicably, it had not.

Just one human being out of a global estimate of several billion souls, Professor Duncan was growing old. There may have been a scant few other specimens of the humanoid species which, due to circumstances and/or other conditions that surrounded them, experienced the same phenomenon but failed to attract attention to themselves.

Be that as it was, the first intimation that he was out of step with the rest of the world was borne in on Duncan's consciousness that morning when his electric razor clogged up. He suddenly became aware of his increasing graying hair.

"Huuuumm—like an old plant left in the cellar to vegetate," he remarked aloud. "It's funny that as people grow old they develop wattles, warts, and wens. Hair grows or thickens in the strangest places—in noses, ears, and eyebrows while it ceases to grow where it

should. I'm getting bald around the crown."

"As people grow old," he had said, then stopped. But people didn't grow old any more. A funny little thrill coursed up and down his spine.

Then he suddenly became aware of other suggestions of aging. He recalled little twinges of pain which now and then assailed different parts of his body, the slowing down and stiffening of muscles, the growing arthritic condition in his joints; of the general decline of his drive and virility.

One observation led to another. He became aware of a gradual softening of his general philosophy, of his thinking, and he began to study and analyze himself curiously. Thus he became aware of his growing disinclination to throw his weight around, to take issue argumentatively upon any topic, realizing how little he actually knew about matters outside his own field—about religion, politics, women—anything. He gave ground readily, not because he was unsure of himself but because the issue made little difference to him. He didn't care any longer. He was fast losing interest in the world.

Until he fell in with the case-keeping which so enthralled Whittier and Dr. Miln.

By the use and careful study of their many charts and his own experiments and records Professor Duncan finally came to the amazing and puzzling conclusion that, while he himself lived through a complete cycle of three hundred and sixty-five days or one full year, everybody else in existence lived approximately one week. Thus it developed that all human beings—with the exception of Professor

Horatius Duncan—required a full year to age one week. It was inexplicable.

"Which I admit is something," he conceded. "But it isn't the whole answer and it solves nothing. So we must seek further."

It was but one short, logical step for him to amalgamate himself as a sort of guinea pig with the Whittier-Miln combine and to step within the circle of these two observers.

As the months and then the years slid by people became lulled by the insidious passing of time. With the figure of Professor Duncan ever before them, like the specter at the feast, as a focusing lens, they had a sort of measuring stick to gauge the flight of the years, to them undamaging. Sight of the professor was similar to the shock of meeting an old friend after the passage of many years and to note the ravages of time they would not have otherwise noted if seen day after day.

Among other things, Professor Duncan devoted considerable thought to bravery. True, it did take high courage of a sort to be a hero in battle. Possibly the various glands stimulated more readily in the young. To grasp a standard and charge headlong up a hill to assault the ramparts of an enemy and thrust the colors down the muzzle of a cannon did require verve, elan, spirit of a kind, and the bounding energy of reckless, impatient youth. It was an indefinable something that everyone did not possess. It was also damn foolishness.

To continue to live on into the complete obscurity and uncertainty of old age with facilities failing took courage of a rare sort. Not

really rare, because everybody had it, but rare in so much as it meant advancing into and penetrating the twilight, the unknown, the uncharted region of life for which there were no maps, no signposts, no detailed descriptions and markers in spite of all the many words set down by windfall man to chart the way for those who would follow him.

Thus it was that Professor Duncan made the discovery. No longer was a day a full twenty-four hours in its effect upon living matter.

Three hundred and sixty-five days had the cumulative effect as seven days had formerly had. In other words, the metabolisms of human life had suddenly and unaccountably slowed down to where a year of time had only the effect of one week. Thus, the ten years which had emptied all the schools of the world and brought many economic changes into being were but as the passing of ten weeks of awareness.

Only to Horatius Duncan was passage of time held up like an hour glass. Only to him was there any meaning in the phrase, "It is later than you think."

In addition, he found himself beginning to weary of the increasingly burdensome struggle for existence.

It is not exactly the correct term to apply to say that he was tired of life, but he found himself remembering something his father had once said:

"I will be glad when I finally lie down to sleep and shall wake nevermore," his father had said. Which was precisely what had happened; the elder Duncan had died of heart failure during the night.

That Duncan should recall this

was logical because he had no company on his own march toward eternity. He was alone. It was probably this fact that pinpointed the situation in his own mind and made him search desperately, yet coldly, for a reason to go on living—for an interest.

He found it in the increasing certainty that something needed looking into—knowledge that something was horribly wrong with the world. He had no assurance that he had caused it, but he dared not grow into his dotage and die before he had discovered what was wrong and set it right if possible.

He became more obsessed with this driving motive each day. The urgency of his task became the stark necessity of his existence.

From a prolonged and intense study of things around him as well as on the Whittier-Miln charts Professor Duncan began slowly to fit together the pattern of things as they now were. From the Stanton couple next door he drew observations of the terrible length of the term of gestation. From homes for the aged, from hospitals and other sources he made notations of the long drawn out time it took for hopeless people to die.

From every sort of laboratory, husbandry farm and station he obtained and studied reports and statistics on the way of life, finally being forced to make the deduction that mankind was the only mammal afflicted by this drastic change in the life cycle. Not that man was any more deserving but that he was the only thinking mammal possessed of a time sense.

All stock, all growing things, all other mammalian species continued to observe their normal and accepted life span—gestation, birth,

growth, decay, and death. Only man was afflicted with the altered time sense. Only man lived an entire year of three hundred and sixty-five days and then tossed the whole bundle of days and months behind him as a careless week.

Great as was this explanation it gave him no answer to the overall problem. What had caused the change? Why wasn't he affected like everybody else? What had brought about the condition and, if man made, how to undo the damage? The burden of arrested time lay in heavy gelidity across the shoulders of the world.

Such was the over-all picture of things the evening Professor Duncan met the glib Mr. Grayson Abbott and the melancholy George Martinez of Houri fame. And as he dutifully ascended the portico steps of the Hiram Parkers in the wake of Martha and Joan Winstance he felt a thousand years old.

7. The Second Blowup

FRED WHITTIER and Dr. Miln had already arrived and had met Mrs. Hiram Parker's New York City guests. Abbott and Martinez had met at dinner, quietly, like gentlemen, with no hostility showing.

Philip Grayson Abbott had not the faintest inkling of the state of affairs between Celeste Sprague and Martinez of the Houri Cosmetic Company. He was, frankly, a confidence man. He had latched on to Mrs. Virginia Parker because the ostentatious glitter of her jewelry had kindled a responsive gleam in his eyes, and he became obsessed with private plans for their acquisition. He was complete-

ly unaware of the recently voiced intentions of Celeste Sprague and unconcerned as well.

All four men—Miln, Whittier, Martinez, and Abbott—were with Mr. Parker in his study upon the arrival of Professor Duncan and his ladies. At the noise of their entrance Parker appeared in the doorway, a cocktail glass in his hand.

"Good evening." He waved his glass in welcome while his wife jetticed around in her energetic fire-hose fashion. "Come on in. Hello, Duncan. I want you to meet Mr. Martinez of Houri Cosmetics, and Mr. Abbott of Abbott and Company. Gentlemen, this is the Professor Horatius Duncan of whom you have heard."

"Indeed! I am honored," said Abbott in his oiliest voice.

"No intoxicants, Horatius," cautioned Martha at once. "Remember, you are driving."

"Yes," admitted Duncan after a brief hesitation. He crossed the floor and shook hands with the broker as he let his eyes flit across the three men in the background. "But don't feel so honored at meeting me. I see you have already met the men who have all claim to fame. Dr. Miln and Mr. Whittier."

"This is Mr. Martinez," went on Parker, indicating the silent third man. "Don't let him lure you away from Parker Plastics. Abbott is the man he really wants."

"Yes?" said Duncan, offering his hand in turn to Martinez. "Why?"

"He thinks his products need promoting. We'll cook up something for him before the evening's over."

"I trust so," replied Duncan politely. "And where is Rusovski? I understood that he—"

"He'll arrive later," filled in

Parker. "What will you have to drink?"

"Horatius!" exclaimed Martha in accents of horror. "You know better than to inquire after guests you don't see."

"Oh, Ivan is playing for the Croton Uplift Society," put in Mrs. Parker. "He will arrive any minute now."

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to appear rude," apologized Duncan. "There are just a few details I must run over with him before I forget them—one or two points I must ask him about before I forget."

"You?" exclaimed Parker incredulously. "Ask him? What can he know that you don't?"

"A great deal, perhaps. But I merely want to exchange some thoughts with him this evening."

"What sort of thoughts?" inquired Dr. Miln, instantly alert.

"Regarding some theories that we're working on," explained Duncan briefly, dismissing the matter and changing the subject.

Martinez looked at him curiously. Duncan sensed a group attitude instantly.

"There is no point in this pretense," he went on frankly. "No reason for strain or embarrassment. I have accepted my peculiar place in our national life—in world life, rather—so nobody needs to look askance at me or speculate on my unique condition. Frankly, Dr. Miln and I, Fred Whittier and I, and Rusovski and I are trying to solve the riddle of my mysterious aging process while the entire remainder of the world stays young!"

Martinez looked intently at the professor. "I have exactly the same problem in reverse. I've got to find out why nobody ages. And the

strain is making an old man of me."

The group reacted with a round of smiles. Except Duncan and Martinez who failed to see anything funny in the situation.

"Well, let us have it," called Virginia Parker. "A round table of poker? I had planned two tables of bridge originally but the party grew too large."

"Please," begged Duncan immediately. "There are eight of you without me. And I must talk with Rusovski when he comes. So go ahead and play bridge."

"Yes, let's play a few rubbers," chimed Martha Duncan. "Horatius has become an execrable bridge player. He doesn't keep track of the cards."

Mr. Abbott used this pairing off as his excuse for appropriating the attention of Mrs. Parker. That his eyes seemed to linger a bit longer than was necessary on the sunburst brooch at his hostess' bosom went unnoticed to all save Duncan. And the professor thought it was merely admiration. Before he could dwell on the impression he had received, the doorbell chimed and the lanky Rusovski was admitted.

After introductions all around, the card players settled themselves to play and Duncan found himself free to talk with the Russian.

"Rusovski," opened Duncan despondently. "I'm just about to give myself up. I can't find any sense or logic in all of this trouble. That last lead I have now checked against Whittier's chart of simian life force and the loris of Gibraltar dwindled away. I—"

"Just a minute," interrupted Rusovski, waving one languid hand. "First let me see what can be found at the bar. Remember I've been entertaining the proletariats

and peasants of the outer steppes. I am weary."

"Help yourselves," Parker called out.

"Horatius!" warned Martha.

"Serve yourself," said Duncan to his companion. "I don't care for anything."

"You are taking the wrong view," said Rusovski, shaking his head sorrowfully as he marched into the den, around behind the bar and proceeded to mix whiskey and ice. "All in its appointed turn, Professor. Ahhhh! Now we can resume our theorizing with spiritual clarity. Go ahead."

"To where?" asked the professor sardonically. "I've thought myself clear around the circle. There's nothing left for me to think."

"No?" said Rusovski cheerfully. "Then let's begin again. Now we have checked every sort of unusual occurrence that has come to our attention or that we could think of. Further, we have had Whittier's newspaper resources to bring to mind many items which would otherwise have been missed. But we have missed the enigma or we haven't come across it yet. Is that not clear?"

"Yes. And nothing has come of it."

"So now we will expound a new theory closer to home, or just run over our experiments again," said Rusovski, not at all dismayed. "First, let me expostulate once more the suggestion that this condition which faces the world is the result, somehow, of Milliken rays. We have already thoroughly checked into the fall-out of the radioactive bombs which have been exploded. Now the true Milliken rays do not penetrate this close to Earth in harmful quantity or in-

tensity because of the shielding atmospheric envelope. Hein? You yourself taught me that."

"Yes," admitted Duncan. "And nothing has come of that theory."

"Wait a bit," rejoined Rusovski, taking another long pull at his drink. "Let me fill my glass."

Duncan seated himself moodily on a stool. "I believe I will have some bourbon on the rocks after all."

"But of course," responded Rusovski. "We have possibly been too close to the forest to see the trees," he went on significantly.

"How do you mean?" demanded Duncan, picking up his drink.

"Think back. We have never investigated that explosion of your cyclotron plant here in Croton. Have we?"

Struck by the very gargantuanism of that idea Duncan drained his glass, set it down, and silently refilled it to the brim. Then he picked it up and solemnly repeated his gesture.

"No," he admitted deliberately, "we haven't. Just what do you have in mind?"

"I don't know," admitted the other confidentially. "But it is time we considered this angle."

"Just what did you tell me about the atomic plant at Molinsk?"

"Very little. I understood very little. Something about the wiring circuits, wasn't it?"

"No—yes, you did say something about a possible mistake in the wiring plans. But that's not what I mean. I have just a glimmering—something you said about the unusual luxuriance of the surrounding shrubbery."

"Yes. Everything grew so abundantly," said Rusovski. "With-

out any reason. They had to cut and trim everything twice as often as all other normal shrubbery. Until the chief electrical technician discovered a minor mistake in the wiring plans and changed it. That was what I must have said."

"That was it!" said Duncan enthusiastically. "I remember now."

"Well?" demanded the Russian almost belligerently. "What did you do about it? What did you learn by your investigation?"

Professor Duncan deliberated on this query while the pair of them gravely filled and emptied their glasses once again. Then:

"Nothing," was Duncan's enlightening reply.

"Well, suppose—now remember that I said just suppose—" pronounced Rusovski in due gravity, "suppose we consider that I don't know what kind of ray you may have let loose that day and I don't know what its power was, but for want of closer identification let's call it the XYZ ray. Anyway—boom!—there was your peculiar explosion, you wake up in the hospital, and the entire world suddenly has changed. Now as there is a definitely different way of life, there has to be a definite cause. This possibility you haven't explored. So let's do it."

"It's a thousand to one chance," hiccupped Duncan. "Pardon me."

"Certainly. Let's analyze—examine this theory while it waxes hot. Now we know that something has caused this phenomenon. We haven't explained your mysterious explosion yet. So we simply put the two indicents—incidents together, and what have you got?"

"We still haven't got an answer."

"No, but we have two unexplained mysteries," admonished Rusov-

ski in the sage manner of two drinks too many. "So you accidentally released an XYZ ray of unknown intensity which flashed around the entire world, piercing every bit of living matter. But instead of effecting the chlorophyll life it only affected mammalian tissue. That much we have seen. That much we know. Now what?"

"But why didn't it affect me?" interrupted Duncan in some heat. "I'm not a freak."

"No, you're not," agreed Rusovski, owlishly considering this angle. "But you were protected by a three-foot wall of leaded glass and brick and stuff. That is what must have protected you."

"But how about all the other people in the world?" What about those who may have been protected in lead mines, or by diving beneath thousands of tons of shielding water? Or high in the skies in pressurized airplanes? Or in any number of insulated places?"

"How about 'em?" conceded Mr. Rusovski generously. "Maybe a hundred or perhaps a thousand persons escaped contact with the XYZ rays. So they haven't come forward in the interests of science as you have done and admitted it. They may not really know it yet. All these things have to be worked out carefully. That's a question of little academic value right now. The bald fact remains that Professor Duncan accidentally exploded an unknown ray which we call XYZ—"

"Stop calling it the XYZ ray," growled Duncan argumentatively.

"Well, you name it then," conceded the other, pausing in mild anticipation. "Here, lemme fix another drink. We can toast it."

He mixed another libation, upending the bottle of bourbon and draining it over the ice cubes before him. "Anyway," he resumed, "this cyclotronic ray affected every type of mammalian species that we have yet found. Professor Duncan did not affect himself because he happened to be thoroughly insulated. Now, you can take it or leave it as a workable theory. Where's a fresh bottle?"

Professor Duncan sat rigid on his stool for a long time while Rusovski searched industriously for liquor. Then he took a pencil from his pocket and began figuring on the back of an envelope. Then he stared unseeing into the mirror of the back bar. Finally, after the passage of unreckoned time, he rose unsteadily to his feet and walked bareheaded out of the den and out into the night through the back entrance of the house.

Two hours later, when the card party broke up, the players searched for the professor in vain. They unearthed Rusovski, asleep under the bar but of Duncan there was not a trace.

Whittier drove Martha and Joan home. He was endeavoring to soothe their anxiety when the entire city of Croton-on-the-Hudson was shaken by a terrific blast and the town was plunged into darkness.

Emergency lights went on, the clean-up squad of the Universal Electric Company went to work, and once again Professor Duncan was dug out of the ruins of his laboratory and rushed to the hospital.

He awoke under the care of Dr. Snodgrass.

"Uuummm—another explosion at the cyclotron plant," commented

the first-aid expert at Duncan's fluttering eyelashes. "More violent this time. Reminiscent of that one ten years ago. But this one was an implosion, I understand, or so they told me. Had the reverse effect of an explosion. But it wrecked the plant. You were working late, Professor. You were almost smothered by the mass of debris that was piled up on you. They had to dig you out. Just in time, too. But there are no bones broken. I X-rayed you from head to foot. However—"

"X-rays be damned!" said Professor Duncan precisely, struggling to sit erect and peeling off the yards and yards of bandaging. "I've had enough rays to last me for two lifetimes."

"Here! Here! You mustn't do this. You're drunk. You must go to bed for a couple of days. You're in no condition to be up. You need rest and care."

"If only it works!" declared Duncan, speaking aloud to himself. "I've got to go home."

"Hey! Wait!"

But Professor Duncan, clad in hospital pajamas, was gone before the irate Dr. Snodgrass could say another word.

Duncan stalked into his house looking like an animated scarecrow just in time to catch Fred Whittier.

Martha let out a scream and then widened her mouth to launch into a scathing reprimand.

"Horatius Duncan! Of all the—"

"Shut up! I've just reversed the field of the cyclotron explosion of ten years ago, Fred. I've blown the hell out of the electric plant. God only knows if it will work. So watch your charts for the next few weeks. Right now I'm going to bed, and I'm not in to anyone. Good night."

TWO mornings after the second explosion, rather, the first implosion of the Croton cyclotron plant, Professor Duncan sat in bruised and sore ease in the midst of his family. He had recovered from his alcoholic binge. There was a gleam and sparkle in his eye. He had thrown off that apathy of advancing decadence which he had been wearing like a mantle of gloom. He was a man who shone with a new personality, a renewed purpose, a rediscovered meaning to life.

All the philosophic accumulations of the past ten years were sponged from the slate as though they had never been. His mind was vigorously at work again. He had found a renewed zest for labor and life. He was busy making plans for financing and rebuilding the atomic laboratory. Once again he was the driving, energetic Professor Duncan the whole world was talking about.

In fact everything was flowing along perfectly, when without warning there came the sound of a heavy body falling in the rear of the house with sufficient force to make the floor tremble. Then silence.

"Sheila?" cried Martha Duncan, calling out the name of her valued domestic. "Sheila Garrity! Answer me! What happened?"

There was no response. Professor Duncan forced himself erect and led the way into the kitchen. The figure of the domestic was lying on the floor. Her complexion had a queer bluish cast. A small soup ladle lay loosely across one hand.

She had obviously suffered some sort of a heart attack while preparing lunch—had been stricken in the very act of tasting the soup. A cursory examination told Duncan that she was dead.

Duncan whirled toward the telephone and dialed. "Doctor Miln. This is Horatius Duncan. Come over on the double. Sheila Garrity has just dropped dead from a heart seizure."

The following two hours were like a nightmare to the Duncans, ending only when the medical examiner finally departed from the house with the body of Sheila Garrity and the pot of vegetable soup.

"We'll hold an inquest as soon as I can perform a post mortem," he announced bluntly. "But I can safely say now that the woman died of cyanide poisoning. There's enough cyanide in that soup pot to wipe out the neighborhood."

"What?" exclaimed Duncan.

"You heard me," said Dr. Gray abruptly. "Ask Dr. Miln here. Lieutenant Peasley will want your statement."

"Horatius—what is it?" shuddered Martha. "What is happening?"

"I—don't—know," he answered slowly. "I've got to investigate this business. I have to think about it for a while."

"It's—unbelievable!" said Joan, her features blanched white. "What can we do?"

"I'll know after the police investigation," Horatius replied, looking from his wife to her sister. "Don't either of you eat or drink before we locate that poison. Meanwhile I'll get a squad in here to check everything in the house."

But it wasn't as simple as this. Duncan was in for a shock. The



Duncan dropped to the ground and stared at
the bullet-hole in his hat.

entire police department had nothing to reveal beyond the stark fact that the death of Sheila Garrity was due to the addition of potassium cyanide in the pot of soup. It was murder.

Dr. Miln was the one who added further highlights to the mystery. "You're looking in the wrong end of the horn, Duncan," the physician said. "No group of Irish patriots was gunning for your innocent old cook. She was not the person the killers were after. She just happened to get in the way. The poisoner was after *you*—Professor Horatius Duncan himself."

"What sort of foolishness are you talking?" demanded the surprised Duncan. "I have no money, no secrets, no enemies. There isn't one—"

"Hold on," interrupted Miln. "You think you have no enemies? You have a whole world full. All of that publicity you've received has done you no good. Just because there were no holocausts, no widespread riotings or massacres doesn't mean there have been no fanatics. Neither does any subsequent action of yours, whether good or bad, negate anything. How would they know whether anything you've done in the last month would undo the spell? Even I don't know, and I am supposed to be right in the middle of it."

"How do you arrive at such an involved conclusion?" queried the professor curiously.

"Very simply," replied Miln frankly. "Nothing on Sheila Garrity has worked out. But everything the police have trained on you has indicated that Professor Duncan is slated for death. Don't overlook the fact that you have been under heavy suspicion yourself. The police have discovered

nothing positive in the way of evidence as yet; they have simply learned that Sheila Garrity's death was an accident. The poisoned meat was meant for you. If Sheila hadn't tasted the soup you wouldn't be here talking to me today."

"I don't understand it," Duncan murmured. "And I don't necessarily believe it."

"Believe it or not," said Dr. Miln solemnly, "you stick close to the shore for the present. Now what is all this mess you created the other night on this cyclotron business?"

"Oh, that. It was the last theory that Rusovski and I worked out. It's rather hazy to me now, but I remember working out several equations the other night that I have since lost. I tried to put them in effect, but you and Fred will have to watch the charts very closely for a time. I intended doing the same, but what you are telling me complicates things and, if true, makes the matter more difficult."

"You don't believe me?"

"Not exactly, no."

"But you will heed me?" pursued the doctor anxiously.

"I—yes, for the present—I guess. I'll have to confer with Whittier and Rusovski."

"Well, don't talk too much," cautioned the doctor bluntly. "Keep your nose clean and shy away from strangers."

Which was probably sage advice and which Duncan followed religiously for the balance of the week, even though he couldn't bring himself seriously to believe the balderdash the good doctor was so earnestly ladling out. Until that morning three days later when his complacence was shattered by an unseen, unidentified, and unappre-

hended person who took a pot shot at him.

This put the shoe on his other foot with a vengeance, placing a completely new complexion on things.

He and his neighbor, John Rawlings, were driving to work that morning. They were passing along a factory housing division not far from the electricity plant when suddenly, without warning of any sort, they heard the crack of a rifle. There was the instantaneous whine of a bullet and the jerking of the hat from Duncan's head.

Although the sounds were unfamiliar to both men, the suddenly hatless Duncan realized things were not right. He stepped hard on the foot brake and with his left hand, flicked open the car door and went rolling down into the street after his hat, even as his companion stared wildly around for the source of the shot.

"What was that?" demanded Rawlings puzzled. "What's happened?"

"I think that was the report of a high compression rifle," Duncan explained grimly as he recaptured his hat and disbelievingly stuck a rigid finger through a neatly ventilated hole high in the crown. He scrutinized the blank house fronts and the deserted yards on both sides of the street.

"Look! At your finger!" shrilled his companion, pointing. "That hole in your hat! How—why—where could it have come from?"

Duncan brought his gaze back from the closed and deserted looking house fronts along the block. He jerked the mutilated hat onto his head and fairly threw himself into the driver's seat of the car. He swung it into gear and raced

furiously into the next block to the frightened and silent consternation of his alarmed and uncomprehending passenger. Then he pulled up at the curb.

"You will be safe walking on from here, Rawlings," he said. "You've only a block farther to go anyway. I'm going to report that shot to the police."

"But—but—" spluttered the bewildered Rawlings.

"It's all right," dissembled Duncan carelessly. "I'll just report this incident about some careless kid shooting off a gun within the city limits. It's dangerous, but the police will take care of it. I'll see you later; no sense in your coming along."

He pulled away calmly enough. But he was trembling inwardly from the shock of the experience and he wasn't so calm when he reached the nearest police station.

"Look at my hat!" he said to Desk Sergeant Hames. "A bullet not fifteen minutes ago."

"Yes?" said the desk sergeant in polite boredom. "And so?"

"So I'm tired of being a sitting duck," Duncan replied succinctly and in some heat. "Just what have you got on my case, anyhow?"

"Your case? You are—?"

"Horatius Duncan. Of the Croton Light and Power Company."

"Oh, yes. I see," replied the phlegmatic sergeant. "Just a minute."

He eased himself off his stool and waddled back through his littered office and through a rear door which he carefully closed behind him. After a short wait he came back to the impatient Duncan whose tension was gradually subsiding as he mentally pursued several avenues of proper reaction.

"Sorry it took so long, Professor



Here was a new—an unbelievable Duncan.

Duncan," he apologized. "They had to check your case at headquarters. The truth of the matter is—nothing. Nothing further has been added—I think."

"What? Who's in charge of this business?"

"At headquarters? Lieutenant Peasley and Dr. Crane—I think."

"And nothing has been added? While I'm waiting to be killed! Well, thanks for nothing, Mr. Rodin."

"Rodin? My name's Hames. What—"

"The thinker," Duncan flung over his shoulder as he wheeled and strode out.

At his office at the electric laboratory he got Rusovski on the phone.

"Ivar? This is Duncan. I'm called unexpectedly out of town. Can you take over the rebuilding—the blueprints of the cyclotron plant? Yes, fine. I am leaving it all set up for you. Contact Mr. Leslie out here at once. And stay in touch with Dr. Miln and Fred Whittier for counsel. That's all."

Next he called the newspaper reporter.

"Whittier? Duncan. Can you take charge of things at my home for a little while? I'll be out of circulation for a time. Watch your charts closely with Dr. Miln. I'll contact you as quickly as I can. Good luck. And be careful."

He slammed down the phone with no further parley and proceeded to haul a leather brief case out of a drawer which he began methodically to pack. He hesitated over an automatic pistol. Then with a shrug he packed the gun, following it with a box of ammunition.

Next he called his wife.

"Martha," he said tenderly at

the sound of her voice, "I've got to take a trip. Fred will explain to you. Just don't worry. Rusovski is taking care of things at the plant. If there's anything further you need to know, ask Dr. Miln or Fred. Have Fred pick up the car at the station. Good-bye."

One more call—to Dr. Miln.

"I just called you, Doctor, to say that today I firmly believe all that stuff you've been warning me about. I'm being seriously hunted down and it's dangerous for anybody in my vicinity. So I'll be away for a time. You can tell Dr. Crane and Lieutenant Peasley, please. Otherwise, compare notes with Whittier and Rusovski."

"Here! Wait! Where are you off to?" cried Miln.

"To get the killer you wished off on me," was the grim retort. "Good-bye and good luck. Watch the curves on your charts with Whittier. Sorry that I can't follow through with you, but I'll be back. Don't waste your time hunting me. I won't be available. So long."

Such was the brief leavetaking of Professor Duncan. He simply dropped out of sight that morning at the railroad station. At the ticket window the police ascertained that he had purchased a one-way fare south to New York City. They proved further that he boarded the train. And that was the end of him. Professor Duncan just disappeared, fading out of the lives of everybody who knew him.

The next week he was forgotten in the news; in the rush of greater events.

Mrs. Russell Stanton was rushed to the hospital and was delivered by Dr. Miln of a normal, husky boy baby to whom she presented the name of Richard Beverly. All

around the world many other women followed her example. Thus, the pattern of human events, with scarcely a falter in its steady stride, caught up the pattern of life without wrecking the machine, and went placidly on its way as though Horatius Duncan had never built a cyclotron plant in the first place. Fred Whittier and Dr. Ignatz Miln placed a gold star beside Mrs. Russell Stanton's name and bent intently over their system of charts.

With the swift passing of ten weeks they had something to marvel at. A queer discovery. To everybody that lived, the passage of one week was somehow exactly like the passage of one year. It proved to be the precise reverse of the time element as discovered through the most recent passage of the years. Thus, in the ten short weeks following Duncan's implosion of the cyclotron everybody on whom could be marked the passage of time, there appeared the resultant aging process of ten years. Somehow Nature had compensated, or Duncan had worked out an unerring correction, for the preceding decade of time. The world, having enjoyed a span of ten years which had taken no more obvious time than a summer vacation, had now restored the proper balance of things by aging all human mammals the exact equivalent of ten years in as many weeks of elapsed time.

Dr. Miln had a perfect measuring stick in the person of Richard Beverly Stanton. This baby grew faster than the proverbial weed. He shot up to become the size and attain the physique of a ten-year-old boy in as many weeks. He was a fine physical specimen. With the

mentality and intelligence of a ten-week-old baby.

But it was not on the case of the Stanton boy that Dr. Miln based his conclusions. Babies were being born now on every hand, and they each passed through the same identical phenomenon. Richard Beverly was not a Mongoloid idiot, a hulk of blundering, blubbery flesh with a moronic mind.

Not at all. His intellect was unimpaired, requiring only the time in which to grow and catch up with his body. It was distinctly not a horrible experience—only strange.

And a brand new educational system came into being almost overnight; a training system which evolved at once to meet the expediency of the problem. It was a patient and profound method of teaching both the conscious intellect and the subconscious mind at the same time.

This became the new order of things, a manner of living which became universal and was properly compensated for in that first wave of human babies which swept across the land. A new crowd of nursery school teachers sprang into being. Pediatrics-minded nurses and physicians bloomed and flowered overnight. Boy and Girl Scout trainers became imminently in demand. Kindergarten equipment jumped at once into demand for half-grown children.

There was a frantic revival of toy shops and the manufacturers of special clothing, of cleverly designed furniture, of new playthings, of new cosmetics to meet the sudden need. It was a bonanza, Christmas—a gold strike all at once.

The midget-sized people all about the world began to grow

again, taking up the slack in desperately needed manpower, in clothing, in all sorts of equipment.

A wave of unprecedented prosperity swept around the globe, tracing in all ways the exact reverse of the stilted and restricted pattern which had followed in so close a wake the dearth of babies. The world was coming alive once more and there was prayer and love and joy and laughter. The schoolrooms and colleges and homes were filling up once again.

Only was the figure of Horatius Duncan forgotten. His disappearance had been perfectly timed. The world was swelling and bursting with so many vital, new experiences that he was not remembered.

However, lacking highly skilled training in the ways of espionage and the trustworthy action of detectives, realizing his helplessness, Duncan in dropping from sight carried his problem to that court of last resort—the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Thus, while the increase of the baby census was delighting the entire land a gray-headed professor of science was scrambling energetically over all sorts of ground obstacles and learning to be dexterous in all kinds of fighting, with all sorts of weapons and all kinds of muscular adroitness.

While new teaching techniques were being evolved all over the land to educate the rapidly growing young population a man known by the name of Horace Doomsday was pouring over fingerprints, law cases, files, and methods of tracing and checking unidentified persons in the world. By the time new industries were flourishing across the face of the continent a crisply alert man who

traveled under the name of Horace Doomsday, wearing a neat blue serge suit, a stylish blue-black Homburg and a neatly tailored shoulder holster—a man of well-preserved middle-age—was diligently and patiently seeking out the origin of WASPISH—the World Annihilation Society Prohibiting Immoral Science on Humanity.

Thus it was a completely new and rehabilitated Professor Duncan who appeared one morning to inspect and pass upon the rebuilt cyclotron plant at Croton-on-the-Hudson. The hard-working, disheveled Ivar Rusovski—a far different appearing individual from the grapefruit-piano-playing musician that Duncan had left—was greatly surprised. But Horatius Duncan was astonishing. The entire world had passed through a ten-year aging span that had been a ten-week FBI training course to Duncan.

9. Croton Revisited

ALTHOUGH it had only been ten weeks since he'd left, Duncan had the feeling that a vast gap of time intervened between the Croton he had fled and the Croton he had returned to.

Visibly there was no change, but the change was there; a strange and alien atmosphere, the feeling similar to that experienced by archeologists at the opening of an Egyptian tomb.

Involuntarily he fell to studying everything and everybody he could see—the very trees that lined the streets, the buildings, the landmarks—and he found nothing observable which fostered the impres-

sion of strangeness that he perceived.

It was as though an invisible blanket of change hung like a miasma in the very atmosphere. The change that he noted in the people was frightening. He missed the sight of many persons he had been well acquainted with, while everybody that he thought he recognized was older and grayer than he remembered like an older brother or sister to the person that he recalled.

So it was with a sense of shock that he surveyed the figure of Rusovski. He found himself gazing at a middle-aged man of serious mien with wrinkled countenance and graying hair. It was not the expansive, talkative, youthful man he had left behind him, but a serious, thoughtful man. Certainly not the social playboy who pounded with grapefruit on the piano and sponged outrageously on everybody within reach.

"Rusovski!" he exclaimed. "Ivar!"

"Duncan!" cried out the dumb-founded Russian after staring for an instant. "You're back. You look younger and sharper than before. But I should have known—Miln's and Whittier's charts. But where on earth have you been?"

They embraced each other heartily and Rusovski felt the shoulder harness of the other and backed off quickly.

"I've been on a search, Ivar," Duncan said. "But it begins to appear that I may be too late—by ten years."

"To be truthful about it," frowned Rusovski, "it seems like you have been gone fully that long—and yet, on the other hand, I know you haven't. A very great deal has happened. Let me take it

slowly. It seems that we finished rebuilding this plant years ago, but your reappearance tells me suddenly that it has only been weeks. Everybody has aged almost overnight. It has been amazing, but we should have expected it after so many years the other way. Somehow you solved the mystery, Horatius, and I should have expected it. When do you want your position back? Mr. Leslie has retired, and I have been running the electric plant for you. But everything is just—"

"Hold on. I merely came here to see you, to check on things. Everything has changed overnight for me, too."

"You don't show it," denied Rusovski enviously. "You look just the same as when you went away."

"You forget that I had ten years jump on you," reminded Duncan. "You've just caught up with me. At least, that's what it looks like. I've got to study it."

"I'll take you around," said Rusovski, untying his laboratory apron. "Where do you want to go first? Have you seen anybody?"

"You're the first. I want to go home, of course."

"Come," said Rusovski, slipping into his coat. "My car is out on the parking lot. We'll take it slowly. I won't try to tell you about everything. You just assimilate it slowly. Your wife, for instance. She looks like a woman who has been dying her gray hair and has simply stopped and let it grow out gray. If you've been where you haven't observed the changes in people, just take it easy."

Duncan remained silent, thoughtful as they walked out to the car. He had to readjust to things. It was queer to him to observe the building, the rooms, the equipment



Who would want to poison a harmless old Irish cook?

which looked exactly as he had left them a few short weeks ago and to note how odd was the graying hair and the aging appearance of all the personnel. The entire staff looked as if they were all made up for a theatrical performance. Even the town itself began to look older, everything assumed a hoary and more venerable air.

His own street was strange, but he found the grounds and the house just as he remembered them. His key fitted the front door just as easily as it always had, but he had the presence of mind to ring the doorbell and to wait before entering.

Rusovski said, "I don't know how to tell you anything. I should have taken you on a tour of inspection first. I'll wait for you in the car."

He backed away and went down the steps as the front door swung open. Duncan took in the woman's figure coming toward him. It was Martha with a becoming crown of graying hair. He removed his hat and stood there, his arms outstretched.

"Martha!" he said. "Don't be frightened."

She whispered, "Horatius!" So young! So elegant!"

Then she was laughing and crying in his arms. "Don't look at me. I look terrible!"

"Oh, no," he contradicted tenderly. "Remember that I've already grown old. I just haven't changed in the past ten weeks. It's the world that has moved on. And you are still beautiful to me, darling."

"Oh, it's all so horrible!" she sobbed, burying her face against his chest. "But you look so—so wonderful, Horatius—so distinguished! So far beyond all the other young men I have known." And

then she discovered his holstered automatic as Rusovski had done. She drew back swiftly to stare up into his face. "What is it, Horatius? Why are you armed?"

Duncan hugged her more tightly. "To tell you the honest truth, Martha, I don't really know the answer myself. The whole picture's changed—now. Everybody's viewpoint has shifted in ten short weeks. It seems that I've been a fool and run away from nothing. But I'm committed now and I must finish what I've started. I can't talk to anybody about it, but I can and will tell you this: I am still looking for the murderer of Sheila Garrity. I am seeking out a society that goes under the odd name of 'Waspish' with a director named Daimlerti, and I have the power of the federal government behind me. But all that really matters is that I've come home to you. Tell me about Joan. About Dr. Miln. And about Fred. And about the Parkers. Anybody and anything which comes to your mind."

"Well, everything is so suddenly changed in so short a time. Joan is downtown, shopping today. She and Fred are going to be married right away now. Dr. Miln is withdrawing from active practice. The Parkers are all right, although Mrs. Parker shows this sudden aging the worst. She has quit fluttering around and has withdrawn from her social life altogether. Bennie's still talking rocket ships. Mr. Parker is as testy and acid as ever; he's busy running the plastic plant, but he appears so tired and old."

"I'll see the Parkers next," he decided. "I'll help him make his plastic plant hum."

"Wha—what do you mean?"

"Hiram's still waiting for me as a manager, isn't he?"

"Why, I guess so. I—you, Oh, Horatius, you mean—"

"Sure. Rusovski's running my old laboratory job. I'm free, if Mr. Parker still wants me. I'll run along now while Ivar is here to chauffeur me."

"But you just got here, Horatius," she pouted, clinging to him.

"And I'll be coming back," he assured her, and ran down the steps to the waiting Rusovski.

The Russian started the motor.

"How are the Russell Stantons?" asked Duncan, reminded of his neighbors at sight of the gray and white building beyond his driveway.

"The last time I heard, they were fine," replied Rusovski. "Richard Beverly—he's the long delayed baby, you know—he was born right after you left town, about nine or ten weeks ago—is now a half-grown boy. He has the mind of an infant as yet. He spends most of his time over at Parker's, visiting with Benjamin, I hear."

"What's happened to his own brothers?"

"They're grown up and away from him. Things will settle back into normal as his mind catches up with his body."

"If it ever will," murmured Duncan. "Take me by Parker's—we're in the neighborhood."

Rusovski drove silently to the plastics manufacturer's home. As he turned into the driveway he spoke briefly.

"I just want to prepare you. Some drastic sort of changes have been taking place since you've been away, Horatius. I just want to prepare you."

"Thanks," rejoined Duncan brief-

ly, "I can see that. It's almost like something out of *Rip Van Winkle*."

"More like the *Sleeping Beauty*," observed Rusovski. "You've kissed the entire world out of its charmed sleep with your cyclotron explosion."

They found Virginia Parker at home. She was dressed in a gray gown with a black shawl around her head. Her only jewelry was a prim little cameo at her neckline.

"Professor Duncan!" she exclaimed in pleasure. "What a delightful surprise."

"Mrs. Parker," he replied, bowing over her wrinkled hand. "I just returned and Ivar brought me by here. You are all well and happy I trust."

"Oh, yes, indeed. Mr. Parker will be disappointed to have missed you. He's busy at the plant, you know, nowadays."

"So Ivar has told me. But I'll see him right away. And Benny, too."

"Benny is at home," Mrs. Parker said quickly. "If you like, you can see him before you leave."

She got to her feet as she spoke. "We have just finished remodeling his quarters. The Stanton boy is with him now."

She led the way down the hall and upstairs to the second floor and conducted them into a sterile white wing of the building which seemed like a hospital, a big plate-glass observatory window and pointed therein.

"If we don't make too much noise out here in the corridor it will be all right," explained Mrs. Parker. "Don't be shy. They can't see you through this one-way sheet of glass."

"What—has Benny been ill?" queried the floundering professor. "I hadn't heard."

"Oh, no," she answered quickly. In fear and wonder the professor drew near to the partition. He found himself gazing into a big round room fitted up just like the nose end or navigation chamber of a rocket ship. On the arched dome of the ceiling overhead was a beautiful star map of the heavens. Seated cross-legged on the floor in the big room was an aging Benjamin Parker. His arms were upstretched and he was holding aloft a giant model of a rocket ship. His face was aglow with animation as he was describing the flight to his companion.

Seated flat on the floor opposite him was a half-grown lad, completely enthralled at Parker's antics. Duncan had no trouble identifying the boy as the latest addition to the Russell Stanton family. At long last Benny's dream of rocketing to the Moon had come true. And obviously, Hiram Parker had given up on his son. Duncan was speechless.

"Mr. Parker is so busy at the plastics plant," murmured Virginia Parker regretfully. "He has to work so hard, poor dear, he has no time to give to Benny."

"Yes, I know," Duncan felt constrained to answer. "I promise to see him right away."

He was profoundly silent as Rusovski guided him back to the car in the driveway and headed back toward the electric plant. "Where shall we go next?" he asked.

"Just drop me off at the Parker plant," Duncan responded gravely. "I won't take up any more of your time, Ivar."

"Don't say that," protested the Russian. "It's been a pleasure..."

It was at the Parker factory that everything seemed to swim back

into focus. Here Duncan was unfamiliar and was therefore unable to make any comparisons and detect changes. Hiram Parker, looking a bit older and grayer and tougher, was the same laconic sort of individual he had always been. He sprang to his feet and welcomed the professor with unfeigned delight.

"Duncan! We have missed you like the devil. Where have you been? What have you been doing?"

"I've been away from Croton because I was jeopardizing the lives of everybody around me," answered the professor, choosing his words carefully. "I have reason to hope that all is changed now. If it is—and you still want me—Ivar is handling the cyclotron plant so well that I can be on hand whenever you call me."

"Tomorrow morning at eight o'clock! It couldn't have been timed better. You remember Martinez—of Hour Cosmetics? You met him that night you blew up your cyclotron plant the second time. Well, I've just got his order for a new shipment of spray bottles for a liquid face powder he's putting on the market for aging skins. His business has been reborn overnight. I told him we'd solve his marketing difficulties. You're just in time."

"I'll be here," promised Duncan.

On the way back to his home he asked Rusovski, "That fellow named Abbott who was at Parker's that night. What became of him?"

"I don't know," Rusovski said. "Mrs. Parker was exploiting him I believe. He played the stock market instead of the piano. I guess he's somewhere in New York."

"I don't suppose you have ever heard of a group called WASPISH anywhere around Croton?" carelessly pursued Duncan. "A man by the name of Daimlerti headed it, I believe."

"WASPISH? You mean WASP—World Applied Science Publishers? Yes, they've just set up a new printing plant on the south side of town. I just signed a contract with Mr. Daimlerti last week to furnish power for their presses."

The reply staggered Duncan. "How long has that been in town?"

"They were here before you left. It's a big foreign publishing set-up with its head in France or Italy, I think. They print scientific stuff. I must introduce you to Daimlerti. He'd like to meet you and get your story of the cyclotronic experiment. Whittier said to play it down."

Whatever conclusion Duncan arrived at was knocked out of his head when he arrived home.

A considerably older Dr. Ignatz Miln came rushing to greet him and Duncan stared aghast at the physician. With a stethoscope hooked untidily about his neck, a freshman's green beanie cocked over one ear, and a foolish grin upon his mild face, this was Dr. Miln, the eminent obstetrician? It hardly seemed so to look at him.

"Duncan! How in the world are you? I'm so glad to see you again. Tomorrow I'd have missed you and I would have been very disappointed."

"Why?" was all the astounded Duncan could articulate.

"Because I'm going back to college," informed Miln earnestly. "There's evidently a big section on obstetrics I missed. I'm taking a refresher course . . ."

10. Fall of a Con Man

EXACTLY what sort of scheme, or blackmail racket Philip Grayson Abbott had cooked up which would permit him to get his hands safely on Mrs. Hiram Parker's jewelry will never be known. Let it suffice that it was not crude because rough-hand methods were definitely not included in his polished style. Mr. Abbott was a confidence man of outstanding ability; one of the foremost exponents for whom the "blue sky" laws were especially written.

But how was he to have known that anything so utterly weird and unfathomable as overnight aging would have so dire an effect upon his plans? Why should he have been the only person in all the world to have been granted second sight, to comprehend just how the character of his intended victim was going to react when Professor Duncan worked out the second stage of his formula?

Duncan didn't even know that himself. So how could Mr. Abbott have anticipated the sudden switch of Mrs. Parker from a carefree butterfly back to the drab, early days of her married life; back to the serious business of the cocoon?

Yet this was precisely what happened. With the swift accumulation of years in the space of scant weeks both in physical appearance as well as in mental ratiocination, and coupled with the problem of the suddenly aging Benjamin, the older Hiram with his short-handed development of a plastic plant, the action of Mrs. Parker was entirely consistent and logical.

She simply reverted to the complex of her younger days, with-

drawing from the social world and resuming the mothering care of both her men.

In doing so she discovered that the role of a socialite was not her forte, that the flitting about actually bored and appalled her. So she abruptly stopped wearing gems.

She went further. She sold them and turned over the entire receipts therefrom to Hiram Parker's bank account.

She then withdrew from the world and graciously accepted the role of a grandmother without the grandchildren and accordingly left Mr. Abbott foredoomed to failure.

But this was not the worst of his misfortune. Simultaneous with the loss of the Parker jewels was the loss of his greatest possession—his youth.

Gone in the twinkling was his fatal charm for women, his debonair glamour which made his various shell games automatically successful. The same ten weeks which made a retired old woman out of Virginia Parker made an aging, clawless old wolf of Philip Abbott. To his horrified realization he was suddenly a skiff cast adrift in the middle of the ocean of time, completely out of sight of land.

Not only was his scheme against the Parker estate circumvented but his tactics against the widows, and the daughters and the orphans of the world were completely negated. Mr. Abbott's luxurious wolf robe had turned almost overnight into a mangy coyote collar of a badly worn coat.

Coupled with this was the additional problem of Celeste Sprague. It was either to drop her cold, or invite her to get with his schemes for enrichment. He chose the latter

solution and proceeded to invite her down to his hotel. It was of course not a nice looking rascal who greeted her at the door, but neither was Miss Sprague exactly the runner-up in a beauty contest when she arrived.

Miss Sprague had suffered like a Christian martyr through the past ten weeks of momentous changes. To put it kindly, her beauty had faded. Her hair, not of the texture and coloring which lent itself to gray with charm and beauty, was distinctly mousy. Her skin had not developed the soft patina of middle-age which is brought about by years of cleansing creams and religious cosmetic care. It was more of the texture of a fishwife scaling the day's catch or a prairie woman wielding an axe on a woodpile—a drab creature who had been exposed to the elements all her life. Her slenderness which had been so attractive and had given her that Dresden china elfin grace far back in her lost youth had shifted to the gaunt side.

Abbott, still a considerable jump from the Bowery, greeted her, poured her a cocktail, offered her a cigarette and studied the flabbiness of her chin along with her attenuation. How had he got tangled up with this hag in the first place?

He opened the serious part of the conversation as he poured her second cocktail. "I was wondering whether you have piled up any loot—er—taken care of yourself so to speak—ah, any jewelry—money—any—"

The lady stiffened. She lowered her cocktail and began counting his liver splotches and wrinkles. Funny she had never noticed before how really ugly this man was.

"What exactly do you mean? I don't follow you."

"What I meant was—just how well have you provided for a rainy day? I know I'm saying this badly, but approximately how much have you got?"

"Why?"

"Because to tell you the truth certain long-range plans of mine have gone bad. The stock market angle is not panning out so good for me. I've had to let my secretary go, and I'm moving out of this suite next week. So I was just wondering."

"Wondering what?"

"I—oh, dammit!" he blurted. "I want to marry you but I can't. I haven't got anything. I can't even feed myself, much less a wife. Things haven't worked out as I expected. It will take time and patience to develop another scheme—find another juicy chump like Mrs. Parker."

"What do you mean 'scheme'?"

"I mean I'll have to find another Virginia Parker and set up the right sort of front. I'll have to rig another dame for the fleecing. Can you wait? Will you wait? More important, will you help me do it?"

"Mrs. Parker?" she exclaimed in sudden make believe horror. "What do you mean?"

Proof that he was a crook didn't bother Miss Sprague. The traumatic shock was the discovery that he was a crook without money. This was the telling blow. Miss Sprague had driven her ducks to a very barren market, indeed. Just how in the world could she have stumbled into this sort of mess when she could have chosen the pick of the elite after discarding George Martinez. Could she re-

trace her steps? Could she mend her political fences?

"I'm in the legitimate investment business," Abbott said. "But I've got to have capital to set up a front. I can't operate out of an alley. That's what I'm asking you about. The question is, do you or don't you have it?"

So there it was. Celeste Sprague stared. Of all the—! She shuddered. How in the world had she come down to this?

Almost primly she set down her glass and got to her feet. She picked up her handbag and her gloves.

"Well?" he demanded earnestly. "Have you got any cash? Anything at all you can lend me? Just anything?"

"No! I'm leaving."

"Celeste! Wait! Don't go! If you leave me now I'm—"

"—finished!" stated Celeste flatly. "Don't bother; I'll find my way." She went out of the room like outraged royalty, headed for the elevator.

Abbott watched her go. Now that he had lost her, perversely, he wanted Celeste Sprague. The money was no longer important. He wanted her and she had walked out on him.

He slumped down into a chair. What the hell had happened, anyhow? What kind of a crazy, mixed-up nightmare had life become? What was it all about?

But then again—did it matter? Were definitions important now? He was done. That was the point. And you don't bother to check the trademark on the baseball bat to knock your brains out with. Abbott adjusted his tie and left the room.

They fished him out of the upper bay with a boat hook some four days later.



"You can see my lawyers about your contract in the morning."

11. A Job For Celeste

CELESTE SPRAGUE never learned of Abbot's suicide and probably wouldn't have been greatly bothered if she had. Abbott and his filthy little schemes were forgotten and her mind was probing the future, her sights fastened once more on the fascinating figure of Martinez.

She knew that Houri was staging a monumental comeback. Business was booming in the cosmetic field and the industry was enjoying a marvelous return to solvency.

So her problem now was how to regain her ascendancy with Houri which she had so contemptuously tossed away?

After leaving Abbott, she returned to her apartment and proceeded to lavish a generous and careful cosmetic treatment of Houri products on her crone's body and it was truly amazing what she achieved. She did away with everything except her starved look. In spite of all she could do she still retained a marked stringiness of figure. She sighed. It would have to pass muster.

Finally she called Martinez, wading patiently through a battery of secretaries and vice-presidents until she got to him. Martinez was hard at work restoring the fortunes of Houri Cosmetics. She finally ran him to earth at a viewing of a revived Houri hour at a TV broadcasting station.

His vibrant voice sounded crisp and businesslike and she said, "Hello, Georgie. Do you know who this is?"

Instantly realizing how banal this query sounded, she quickly

added, "this is Celeste Sprague, George. How are you?"

His reply was matter-of-fact. "All right—very busy right now. We're on the air."

"What's wrong, dear?" she coaxed. "I said this is Celeste—Celeste Sprague."

"I heard you," came his quick response. It was cool but was not so brusque as before, and she weighed it carefully. Were they merely business overtones, or was he truly indifferent? Did his voice contain a tiny spark of the old flame which might be waiting to be fanned by careful handling into the old fire?

She went on, "Haven't you missed me, Georgie? It's been horribly long without you."

"You must have the wrong number," he assured her. "If you are really who you claim to be, let me ask if you're watching the Houri hour this afternoon?"

"The Houri hour? Why, yes," Celeste replied in as gay a tone as she could manage. At the same time she leaned forward and flicked the switch to her television set. "The same channel?"

"This afternoon on RBC," he told her. "The whole world's crying for word about Houri Cosmetics. So if you miss TV there are two networks broadcasting on radio. You can't escape it. Is that what you are calling about, please?"

"Good," she answered, her voice hardening a trifle. "I'm calling about my unexpired contract. I've postponed filing suit until now because my lawyer advised it. He said I couldn't get blood from a stone. Now I want to know what you intend doing about completing my contract."

"No good, Celeste. Better look at the Houri telecast and see what

I mean. You can get in touch with my lawyers tomorrow. Good-bye."

The sharp click told her he had hung up on her. She was on the point of going into a majestic rage when her eyes fell upon her TV screen. She cradled the telephone as she looked at the scene on the picture tube.

It was an elaborate set after the manner of a stage spectacular. On the silken couch lay a luscious young creature who was stirring under the kiss of a handsome lad in tights with a page boy bob of glossy black hair. In one hand he clasped a spray bottle of Houri Liquid Face Powder. The age of both of them would scarcely have added up to Celeste's.

It was a tableau from the fairy story of the Sleeping Beauty. While chamber music sifted through, the caressing voice of the announcer whispered,

"... awakens the sleeping beauty with a kiss as gentle and soft as the caress of Houri Liquid Face Powder. At all cosmetic counters and beauty shops . . ."

Viciously, Celeste clicked off the television set. Her eyes were bitter. There was a drawn look about her mouth. Ashes, gall, and wormwood, had been her portion. No luckless individual ever suffered more cruelly on the rack of the Spanish Inquisition.

Of course, the following day, she followed up on her contract with Houri. They paid off like a slot machine; in full settlement. But under no circumstances, not even for free, would she be permitted on another Houri program.

Nor could Celeste honestly believe this attitude was adopted out of vindictiveness. Even though the fresh young beauty of the Houri TV tableau turned out to be the

affianced bride of Mr. George Martinez, president of the Houri Company. Both parties were very happy.

And so Miss Celeste Sprague was side-tracked on the dead-end street of vain regrets. But she was of sterner stuff than Mr. Abbott. She did not end up a suicide, although she got involved with a means thereto when she was told to study up on rat poison. Not for use upon herself, however.

She ended up on a TV program advertising the stuff.

12. The End of the Affair

PROFESSOR DUNCAN would have been the last man in the world to leave a job undone, or to employ an idiom of Hiram Parker's youth, to leave an enemy alive and free on his back trail. This was true, for he was a sensible, logical man, but there were other deeper traits to his steadfast character.

For one thing he discouraged Dr. Miln's attempt at leave-taking upon his own return to Croton-on-the-Hudson and directed the obstetrician's energies back to the task of chart-making and watching. He seemed to be most meticulous—overscrupulous.

Hence, after several weeks of intense study and observation, proving beyond all paraventure, all cavil, all possible error, that the mysterious manifestations of the cyclotron cycle had definitely run their course, he turned his attention to the final item upon his agenda.

"I must now take action," he announced to his confreres one evening.

Whittier lifted his head from the chart he had been studying and asked, "What are you talking about, Horatius?"

"I'm referring to the murder of Sheila Garrity. You didn't think I had forgotten that?"

Dr. Miln reacted sharply. "What do you mean, Duncan?"

"I mean the matter of WASPISH. I've thought it over carefully while we've been studying these world charts and references. The cyclotron plant explosions changed the viewpoint, the drive, the very thought patterns and processes of all of us, even though my problem and my decision remain unalterably before me.

"For example, the reason for the existence of WASPISH has been changed almost overnight to the innocuous mean of plain WASP, with its dissemination of scientific information to the world. This is a most worthwhile and commendable effort, but I can't let it rest there. To do so would permit Antonio Daimlerti to go unpunished for the crime of murder. Sheila Garrity must be avenged.

"Not only that, it leaves my mission unfulfilled. So it's time for me to call on Signor Daimlerti. Will you come along, Fred?"

"Certainly, I'll go along with you."

"And so will I," said Dr. Miln. "I started this rigmarole in the first place by telling you of what the local police had discovered."

"In a way you did," responded Duncan gravely. "Come along if you wish, but assume no responsibility."

"Duncan!" exclaimed Martha, "what are you going to do?"

"Nothing startling, Martha and there's no danger. Daimlerti has long since cooled down. The men

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who first organized their vendetta against Horatius Duncan have long since forgotten their aim and their task. In fact, the initial nucleus is probably not alive today."

So the three men paid a visit to the new printing plant of the World Applied Science Publishing just as the first issue of the new magazine, *Wasp*, for the American masses, was being put to bed.

"We are looking for the manager," Duncan replied to the eye-shaded, young man who accosted them in the press room at the rear of the plant where a small crowd was watching the final installation of the big press. "Mr. Daimlerti."

"Oh, yeah," nodded the harried workman, pointing. "Right on through that door yonder—the third office on the right. Okay, Jackson, let her roll again."

He punched a red button switch.

The whine of starting motors and the mounting roar of the ten-roller press built up to a crescendo of sound as Duncan and his companions moved into the editorial part of the building. At the third door on their right they came upon the neatly lettered gold-and-black name of the man that Duncan sought.

The door stood ajar, and they filed in without knocking. A man, the sole occupant of the room, was bent over a flat-topped desk working with a blue pencil. He barely glanced up.

"Yes?"

Miln and Whittier studied the other man with sharp interest. They saw nothing alarming about the editor. He was a mild-looking, mild-mannered man with a graying tuft of hair and a graying square beard with a generous nose midway between. Mr. Daimlerti may have once been a firebrand in his youth but he was mild in appearance now.

"I am Horatius Duncan," announced the professor calmly. "I understand that *Wasp* would like to print the facts regarding my experiments with the cyclotron plant here in Croton."

Daimlerti blinked once, then said,

"I am the editor of *Wasp*. I have already inquired about such a paper as you propose. Have you written it?"

"Actually that's not the matter

I'm calling about. I'm here to arrest you for the murder of Sheila Garrity."

Daimlerti continued to stare without the least change of expression. There was a long silence. Then Daimlerti sighed.

"Yes," he replied calmly. "I might have anticipated this. But I can't be arrested now. You have no proof, you know. And what about the future of this magazine?"

Duncan indicated the surprised Whittier. "I've brought along the new editor of *Wasp*, Mr. Fred Whittier. He'll take your place. You have met, I believe."

Signor Daimlerti silently eyed the stunned Whittier and then shrugged philosophically. "Very well," he accepted the situation. "Shall we go?"

Such was the quiet arrest of the head of WASPISH. No bloodshed; no hectic last reel chase; no climactic scene at all.

Back home again with Martha, Duncan told the cause of his abrupt departure from Croton, where he had gone, and the final disposition of the entire business.

Somehow, the explanation made it official, put a final period to the whole topsy-turvey affair.

But now it was over. Duncan was back with his family and the world was straightened out.

He smiled and murmured, "I wouldn't have missed it for the world."

THE END

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